MARSENA
AND OTHER STORIES OF THE WARTIME

BY

HAROLD FREDERIC

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Marsena

and Other Stories of the Wartime

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BY

HAROLD FREDERIC

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To my Friend

EDMUND JUDSON MOFFAT

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CONTENTS

	PAGE
Marsena, ...	1
The War Widow, ...	97
The Eve of the Fourth, ...	149
My Aunt Susan, ...	185

Marsena

MARSENA

I.

MARSENA PULFORD, what time the village of Octavius knew him, was a slender and tall man, apparently skirting upon the thirties, with sloping shoulders and a romantic aspect.

It was not alone his flowing black hair, and his broad shirt-collars turned down after the ascertained manner of the British poets, which stamped him in our humble minds as a living brother to "The Corsair," "The Last of the Suliotes," and other heroic personages engraved in the albums and keepsakes of the period. His face, with its darkling eyes and distinguished features, conveyed wherever it went an impression of proudly silent melancholy. In those days—that is, just before the war—one could not look so convincingly and uniformly sad as Marsena did without raising the general presumption of having been crossed in love. We had a respectful feeling, in his case,

that the lady ought to have been named Iñez, or at the very least Oriana.

Although he went to the Presbyterian Church with entire regularity, was never seen in public save in a long-tailed black coat, and in the winter wore gloves instead of mittens, the local conscience had always, I think, sundry reservations about the moral character of his past. It would not have been reckoned against him, then, that he was obviously poor. We had not learned in those primitive times to measure people by dollar-mark standards. Under ordinary conditions, too, the fact that he came from New England—had indeed lived in Boston—must have counted rather in his favor than otherwise. But it was known that he had been an artist, a professional painter of pictures and portraits, and we understood in Octavius that this involved acquaintanceship, if not even familiarity, with all sorts of occult and deleterious phases of city life.

Our village held all vice, and especially the vice of other and larger places, in stern reprobation. Yet, though it turned this matter of the newcomer's previous occupation over a good deal in its mind, Marsena carried himself with such a gentle picturesqueness of subdued sorrow that these suspicions were dis-

armed, or, at the worst, only added to the fascinated interest with which Octavius watched his spare and solitary figure upon its streets, and noted the progress of his efforts to find a footing for himself in its social economy.

It was taken for granted among us that he possessed a fine and well-cultivated mind, to match that thoughtful countenance and that dignified deportment. This assumption continued to hold its own in the face of a long series of failures in the attempt to draw him out. Almost everybody who was anybody at one time or another tried to tap Marsena's mental reservoirs—and all in vain. Beyond the barest commonplaces of civil conversation he could never be tempted. Once, indeed, he had volunteered to the Rev. Mr. Bunce the statement that he regarded Washington Allston as in several respects superior to Copley ; but as no one in Octavius knew who these men were, the remark did not help us much. It was quoted frequently, however, as indicating the lofty and recondite nature of the thoughts with which Mr. Pulford occupied his intellect. As it became more apparent, too, that his reserve must be the outgrowth of some crushing and incurable heart grief, people grew to defer to it and to avoid vexing his silent moods with talk.

Thus, when he had been a resident and neighbor for over two years, though no one knew him at all well, the whole community regarded him with kindly and even respectful emotions, and the girls in particular felt that he was a distinct acquisition to the place.

I have said that Marsena Pulford was poor. Hardly anybody in Octavius ever knew to what pathetic depths his poverty during the second winter descended. There was a period of several months, in sober truth, during which he fed himself upon six or seven cents a day. As he was too proud to dream of asking credit at the grocer's and butcher's, and walked about more primly erect than ever, meantime, in his frock-coat and gloves, no idea of these privations got abroad. And at the end of this long evil winter there came a remarkable spring, which altered in a violent way the fortunes of millions of people — among them Marsena. We have to do with events somewhat subsequent to that even, and with the period of Mr. Pulford's prosperity.

The last discredited strips of snow up in the ravines on the hill-sides were melting away; the robins had come again, and were bustling busily across between the willows, already in the leaf,

and the budded elms; men were going about the village streets without their overcoats, and boys were telling exciting tales about the suckers in the creek; our old friend Homer Sage had returned from his winter's sojourn in the county poorhouse at Thessaly, and could be seen daily sitting in the sunshine on the broad stoop of the Excelsior Hotel. It was April of 1862.

A whole year had gone by since that sudden and memorable turn in Marsena Pulford's luck. So far from there being signs now of a possible adverse change, this new springtide brought such an increase of good fortune, with its attendant responsibilities, that Marsena was unable to bear the halcyon burden alone. He took in a partner to help him, and then the firm jointly hired a boy. The partner painted a signboard to mark this double event, in bold red letters of independent form upon a yellow ground:

PULFORD & SHULL.

EMPIRE STATE PORTRAIT ATHENÆUM AND STUDIO.

War Likenesses at Peace Prices.

Marsena discouraged the idea of hanging this out on the street; and, as a compromise, it was finally placed at the end of the operating-room,

where for years thereafter it served for the sitters to stare at when their skulls had been clasped in the iron head-rest and they had been adjured to look pleasant. A more modest and conventional announcement of the new firm's existence was put outside, and Octavius accepted it as proof that the liberal arts were at last established within its borders on a firm and lucrative basis.

The head of the firm was not much altered by this great wave of prosperity. He had been drilled by adversity into such careful ways with his wardrobe that he did not need to get any new clothes. Although the villagers, always kindly, sought now with cordial effusiveness to make him feel one of themselves, and although he accepted all their invitations and showed himself at every public meeting in his capacity as a representative and even prominent citizen, yet the heart of his mystery remained unplucked. Marsena was too busy in these days to be much upon the streets. When he did appear he still walked alone, slowly and with an air of settled gloom. He saluted such passers-by as he knew in stately silence. If they stopped him or joined him in his progress, at the most he would talk sparingly of the weather and the roads.

Neither at the fortnightly sociables of the Ladies' Church Mite Society, given in turn at the more important members' homes, nor in the more casual social assemblages of the place, did Marsena ever unbend. It was not that he held himself aloof, as some others did, from the simple amusements of the evening. He never shrank from bearing his part in "pillow," "clap in and clap out," "post-office," or in whatever other game was to be played, and he went through the kissing penalties and rewards involved without apparent aversion. It was also to be noted, in fairness, that, if any one smiled at him full in the face, he instantly smiled in response. But neither smile nor chaste salute served to lift for even the fleeting instant that veil of reserve which hung over him.

Those who thought that by having Marsena Pulford take their pictures they would get on more intimate terms with him fell into grievous error. He was more sententious and unapproachable in his studio, as he called it, than anywhere else. In the old days, before the partnership, when he did everything himself, his manner in the reception-room downstairs, where he showed samples, gave the prices of frames, and took orders, had no equal for formal frigidity—except his subsequent demean-

or in the operating-room upstairs. The girls used to declare that they always emerged from the gallery with "cold shivers all over them." This, however, did not deter them from going again, repeatedly, after the outbreak of the war had started up the universal notion of being photographed.

When the new partner came in, in this April of 1862, Marsena was able to devote himself exclusively to the technical business of the camera and the dark-room, on the second floor. He signalled this change by wearing now every day an old russet-colored velveteen jacket, which we had never seen before. This made him look even more romantically melancholy and picturesque than ever, and revived something of the fascinating curiosity as to his hidden past; but it did nothing toward thawing the ice-bound shell which somehow came at every point between him and the good-fellowship of the community.

The partnership was scarcely a week old when something happened. The new partner, standing behind the little show-case in the reception-room, transacted some preliminary business with two customers who had come in. Then, while the sound of their ascending footsteps was still to be heard on the stairs, he has-

tily left his post and entered the little work-room at the back of the counter.

"You couldn't guess in a baker's dozen of tries who's gone upstairs," he said to the boy. Without waiting for even one effort, he added: "It's the Parmalee girl, and Dwight Ransom's with her, and he's got a Lootenant's uniform on, and they're goin' to be took together!"

"What of it?" asked the unimaginative boy. He was bending over a crock of nitric acid, transferring from it one by one to a tub of water a lot of spoiled glass plates. The sickening fumes from the jar, and the sting of the acid on his cracked skin, still further diminished his interest in contemporary sociology. "Well, what of it?" he repeated, sulkily.

"Oh, I don't know," said the new partner, in a listless, disappointed way. "It seemed kind o' curious, that's all. Holdin' her head up as high in the air as she does, you wouldn't think she'd so much as look at an ordinary fellow like Dwight Ransom."

"I suppose this is a free country," remarked the boy, rising to rest his back.

"Oh, my, yes," returned the other; "if she's pleased, I'm quite agreeable. And—I don't know, too—I dare say she's gettin' pretty well along. May be she thinks they ain't any

too much time to lose, and is making a grab at what comes handiest. Still, I should 'a' thought she could 'a' done better than Dwight. I worked with him for a spell once, you know."

There seemed to be very few people with whom Newton Shull had not at one time or another worked. Apparently there was no craft or calling which he did not know something about. The old phrase, "Jack of all trades," must surely have been coined in prophecy for him. He had turned up in Octavius originally, some years before, as the general manager of a "Whaler's Life on the Rolling Deep" show, which was specially adapted for moral exhibitions in connection with church fairs. Calamity, however, had long marked this enterprise for its own, and at our village its career culminated under the auspices of a sheriff's officer. The boat, the harpoons, the panorama sheet and rollers, the whale's jaw, the music-box with its nautical tunes—these were sold and dispersed. Newton Shull remained, and began work as a mender of clocks. Incidentally, he cut out stencil-plates for farmers to label their cheese-boxes with, and painted or gilded ornamental designs on chair-backs through perforated paper pat-

terns. For a time he was a maker of children's sleds. In slack seasons he got jobs to help the druggist, the tinsmith, the dentist, or the Town Clerk, and was equally at home with each. He was one of the founders of the Octavius Philharmonics, and offered to play any instrument they liked, though his preference was for what he called the bull fiddle. He spoke often of having travelled as a bandsman with a circus. We boys believed that he was quite capable of riding a horse bareback as well.

When Marsena Pulford, then, decided that he must have some help, Newton Shull was obviously the man. How the arrangement came to take the form of a partnership was never explained, save on the conservative village theory that Marsena must have reasoned that a partner would be safer with the cash-box downstairs, while he was taking pictures upstairs, than a mere hired man. More likely it grew out of their temperamental affinity. Shull was also a man of grave and depressed moods (as, indeed, is the case with all who play the bass viol), only his melancholy differed from Marsena's in being of a tirelessly garrulous character. This was not always an advantage. When customers came in, in the afternoon, it was his friendly impulse to engage them in

conversation at such length that frequently the light would fail altogether before they got upstairs. He recognized this tendency as a fault, and manfully combated it—leaving the reception-room with abruptness at the earliest possible moment, and talking to the boy in the work-room instead.

Mr. Shull was a short, round man, with a beard which was beginning to show gray under the lip. His reception-room manners were urbane and persuasive to a degree, and he particularly excelled in convincing people that the portraits of themselves, which Marsena had sent down to him in the dummy to be dried and varnished, and which they hated vehemently at first sight, were really unique and precious works of art. He had also much success in inducing country folks to despise the cheap ferrotype which they had intended to have made, and to adventure upon the costlier ambrotype, daguerreotype, or even photograph instead. If they did not go away with a family album or an assortment of frames that would come in handy as well, it was no fault of his.

He made these frames himself, on a bench which he had fitted up in the work-room. Here he constructed show-cases, too, cut out mats and mounts, and did many other things as adjuncts

to the business, which honest Marsena had never dreamed of.

"Yes," he went on now, "I carried a chain for Dwight the best part o' one whole summer, when he was layin' levels for that Nedahma Valley Railroad they were figurin' on buildin'. Guess they ruther let him in over that job—though he paid me fair enough. It ain't much of a business, that surveyin'. You spend about half your time in findin' out for people the way they could do things if they only had the money to do 'em, and the other half in settlin' miserable farmers' squabbles about the boundaries of their land. You've got to pay a man day's wages for totin' round your chain and axe and stakes—and, as like as not, you never get even that money back, let alone any pay for yourself. I know something about a good many trades, and I say surveyin' is pretty nigh the poorest of 'em all."

"George Washington was a surveyor," commented the boy, stooping down to his task once more.

"Yes," admitted Mr. Shull; "so he was, for a fact. But then he had influence enough to get government jobs. I don't say there ain't money in that. If Dwight, now, could get a berth on the canal, say, it 'ud be a horse of

another color. They say, there's some places there that pay as much as $3 a day. That's how George Washington got his start, and, besides, he owned his own house and lot to begin with. But you'll notice that he dropped surveyin' like a hot potato the minute there was any soldierin' to do. He knew which side *his* bread was buttered on!"

"Well," said the boy, slapping the last plates sharply into the tub, "that's just what Dwight's doin' too, ain't it?"

"Yes," Mr. Shull conceded; "but it ain't the same thing. You won't find Dwight Ransom gettin' to be a general, or much of anything else. He's a nice fellow enough, in his way, of course; but, somehow, after it's all said and done, there ain't much to him. I always sort o' felt, when I was out with him, that by good rights I ought to be working the level and him hammerin' in the stakes."

The boy sniffed audibly as he bore away the acid-jar. Mr. Shull went over to the bench, and took up a chisel with a meditative air. After a moment he lifted his head and listened, with aroused interest written all over his face.

There had been audible from the floor above, at intervals, the customary noises of the camera being wheeled about to different points under

the skylight. There came echoing downward now quite other and most unfamiliar sounds—the clatter of animated, even gay, conversation, punctuated by frank outbursts of laughter. Newton Shull could hardly believe his ears: but they certainly did tell him that there were three parties to that merriment overhead. It was so strange that he laid aside the chisel, and tiptoed out into the reception-room, with a notion of listening at the stair door. Then he even more hurriedly ran back again. They were coming downstairs.

It might have been a whole wedding-party that trooped down the resounding stairway, the voices rising above the clump of Dwight's artillery boots and sword on step after step, and overflowed into the stuffy little reception-room with a cheerful tumult of babble. The new partner and the boy looked at each other, then directed a joint stare of bewilderment toward the door.

Julia Parmalee had pushed her way behind the show-case, and stood in the entrance to the work-room, peering about her with an affectation of excited curiosity which she may have thought pretty and playful, but which the boy, at least, held to be absurd.

She had been talking thirteen to the dozen all

the time. "Oh, I really must see everything!" she rattled on now. "If I could be trusted alone in the dark-room with you, Mr. Pulford, I surely may be allowed to explore all these minor mysteries. Oh, I see," she added, glancing round, and incidentally looking quite through Mr. Shull and the boy, as if they had been transparent: "here's where the frames and the washing are done. How interesting!"

What really was interesting was the face of Marsena Pulford, discernible in the shadow over her shoulder. No one in Octavius had ever seen such a beaming smile on his saturnine countenance before.

II.

NEXT to the War, the chief topic of interest and conversation in Octavius at this time was easily Miss Julia Parmalee.

To begin with, her family had for two generations or more been the most important family in the village. When Lafayette stopped here to receive an address of welcome, on his tour through the State in 1825, it was a Parmalee who read that address, and who also, as tradition runs, made on his own account several remarks to the hero in the French language, all of which were understood. The elder son of this man has a secure place in history. He is the Judge Parmalee whose portrait hangs in the Court House, and whose learned work on "The Treaties of the Tuscarora Nation," handsomely bound in morocco, used to have a place of honor on the parlor table of every well-to-do and cultured Octavius home.

This Judge was a banker, too, and did pretty well for himself in a number of other commercial paths. He it was who built the

big Parmalee house, with a stone wall in front and the great garden and orchard stretching back to the next street, and the buff-colored statues on either side of the gravelled walk, where the Second National Dearborn County Bank now stands. The Judge had no children, and, on his widow's death, the property went to his much younger brother Charles, who, from having been as a stripling on some forgotten Governor's staff, bore through life the title of Colonel in the local speech.

This Colonel Parmalee had a certain distinction, too, though not of a martial character. His home was in New York, and for many years Octavius never laid eyes on him. He was understood to occupy a respected place among American men of letters, though exactly what he wrote did not come to our knowledge. It was said that he had been at Brook Farm. I have not been able to find any one who remembers him there, but the report is of use as showing the impression of superior intellectual force which he created, even by hearsay, in his native village. When he finally came back to us, to play his part as the head of the Parmalee house, we saw at intervals, when the sun was warm and the sidewalks were dry, the lean and bent figure of an old man, with a very yellow

face and a sharp-edged brown wig, moving feebly about with a thick gray shawl over his shoulders. His housekeeper was an elderly maiden cousin, who seemed never to come out at all, whether the sun was shining or not.

There were three or four of the Colonel's daughters—all tall, well-made girls, with strikingly dark skins, and what we took to be gypsyish faces. Their appearance certainly bore out the rumor that their mother had been an opera-singer—some said an Italian, others a lady of Louisiana Creole extraction. No information, except that she was dead, ever came to hand about this person. Her daughters, however, were very much in evidence. They seemed always to wear white dresses, and they were always to be seen somewhere, either on their lawn playing croquet, or in the streets, or at the windows of their house. The consciousness of their existence pervaded the whole village from morning till night. To watch their goings and comings, and to speculate upon the identity and business of the friends from strange parts who were continually arriving to visit them, grew to be quite the standing occupation of the idler portion of the community.

Before such of our young people as naturally took the lead in these matters had had time to

decide how best to utilize for the general good this influx of beauty, wealth, and ancestral dignity, the village was startled by an unlooked-for occurrence. A red carpet was spread one forenoon from the curb to the doorway of the Episcopal Church : the old-fashioned Parmalee carriage turned out, with its driver clasping white reins in white cotton gloves ; we had a confused glimpse of the dark Parmalee girls with bouquets in their hands, and dressed rather more in white than usual : and then astonished Octavius learned that two of them had been married, right there under its very eyes, and had departed with their husbands. It gave an angry twist to the discovery to find that the bridegrooms were both strangers, presumably from New York.

This episode had the figurative effect of doubling or trebling the height of that stone wall which stood between the Parmalee place and the public. Such budding hopes and projects of intimacy as our villagers may have entertained toward these polished new-comers fell nipped and lifeless on the stroke. Shortly afterward—that is to say, in the autumn of 1860—the family went away, and the big house was shut up. News came in time that the Colonel was dead : something was said about

another daughter's marriage; then the war broke out, and gave us other things to think of. We forgot all about the Parmalees.

It must have been in the last weeks of 1861 that our vagrant attention was recalled to the subject by the appearance in the village of an elderly married couple of servants, who took up their quarters in the long empty mansion, and began fitting it once more for habitation. They set all the chimneys smoking, shovelled the garden paths clear of snow, laid in huge supplies of firewood, vegetables, and the like, and turned the whole place inside out in a vigorous convulsion of housecleaning. Their preparations were on such a bold, large scale that we assumed the property must have passed to some voluminous collateral branch of the family, hitherto unknown to us. It came indeed to be stated among us, with an air of certainty, that a remote relation named Amos or Erasmus Parmalee, with eight or more children and a numerous adult household, was coming to live there. The legend of this wholly mythical personage had nearly a fortnight's vogue, and reached a point of distinctness where we clearly understood that the coming stranger was a violent secessionist. This seemed to open up a troubled and sinister pros-

pect before loyal Octavius, and there was a good deal of plain talk in the barroom of the Excelsior Hotel as to how this impending crisis should be met.

It was just after New Year's that our suspense was ended. The new Parmalees came, and Octavius noted with a sort of disappointed surprise that they turned out to be merely a shorn and trivial remnant of the old Parmalees. They were in fact only a couple of women—the elderly maiden cousin who had presided before over the Colonel's household, and the youngest of his daughters, by name Miss Julia. What was more, word was now passed round upon authority that these were the sole remaining members of the family—that there never had been any Amos or Erasmus Parmalee at all.

The discovery cast the more heroic of our village home-guards into a temporary depression. It could hardly have been otherwise, for here were all their fine and strong resolves, their publicly registered vows about scowling at the odious Southern sympathizer in the street, about a "horning" party outside his house at night, about, perhaps, actually riding him on a rail—all brought to nothing. A less earnest body of men might have suspected in the situa-

tion some elements of the ridiculous. They let themselves down gently, however, and with a certain dignified sense of consolation that they had, at all events, shown unmistakably how they would have dealt with Amos or Erasmus Parmalee if there had been such a man, and he had moved to Octavius and had ventured to flaunt his rebel sentiments in their outraged faces.

The village, as a whole, consoled itself on more tangible grounds. It has been stated that Miss Julia Parmalee arrived at the family homestead in early January. Before April had brought the buds and birds, this young woman had become President of the St. Mark's Episcopal Ladies' Aid Society; had organized a local branch of the Sanitary Commission, and assumed active control of all its executive and clerical functions; had committed the principal people of the community to holding a grand festival and fair in May for the Field Hospital and nurse fund; had exhibited in the chief store window on Main Street a crayon portrait of her late father, and four water-color drawings of European scenery, all her own handiwork; had published over her signature, in the Thessaly *Banner of Liberty*, an original and spirited poem on "Pale Columbia, Shriek

to Arms ! " which no one could read without patriotic thrills; and had been reported, on more or less warrant of appearances, to be engaged to four different young men of the place. Truly a remarkable young woman !

We were only able in a dim kind of way to identify her with one of the group of girls in white dresses whom the village had stared at and studied from a distance two years before. There was no mystery about it, however : she was the youngest of them. They had all looked so much alike, with their precocious growth, their olive skins and foreign features, that we were quite surprised to find now that this one, regarded by herself, must be a great deal younger than the others. Perhaps it was only our rustic shyness which had imputed to the sisterhood, in that earlier experience, the hauteur and icy reserve of the rich and exclusive. We recognized now that if the others were at all like Julia, we had made an absurd mistake. It was impossible that anyone could be freer from arrogance or pretence than Octavius found her to be. There were some, indeed, who deemed her emancipation almost too complete.

Some there were, too, who denied that she was beautiful, or even very good - looking. There is an old daguerreotype of her as she was

in those days—or rather as she seemed to be to the unskilled sunbeams of the sixties—which gives these censorious people the lie direct. It is true that her hair is confined in a net at the sides and drawn stiffly across her temples from the parting. The full throat rises sheer from a flat horizon of striped dress goods, and is offered no relief whatever by the wide falling-away collar of coarse lace. And oh! the strangeness of that frock! The shoulder seams are to be looked for half-way down the upper arm, the sleeves swell themselves out into shapeless bags, the waist front might be the cover of a chair, of a guitar, of the documents in a corporation suit—of anything under the sun rather than the form of a charming girl. Yet, when you look at this thin old picture, all the same, you feel that you understand how it was that Julia Parmalee took the shine out of all the other girls in Octavius.

This is the likeness of her which always seemed to me the best, but Marsena Pulford made a great many others as well. When you reflect, indeed, that his output of portraits of Julia Parmalee was limited in time to the two months of April and May, their number suggests that he could hardly have done anything else the while.

The first of this large series of pictures was the one which Marsena liked least. It is true that Julia looked well in it, standing erect, with a proud, fine backward tilt to her dark face and a delicately formed white hand resting gracefully on the back of a chair. But it happened that in that chair was seated Lieut. Dwight Ransom, all spick and span in his new uniform, with his big gauntlets and sword hilt brought prominently forward, and with a kind of fatuous smile on his ruddy face, as if he felt the presence of those fair fingers on the chair-back, so teasingly close to his shoulder-strap.

Marsena, in truth, had a strong impulse to run a destroying thumbnail over the seated figure on this plate, when the action of the developer began to reveal its outlines under the faint yellow light in the dark-room. Of all the myriad pictures he had washed and drained and nursed in their wet growth over this tank, no other had ever stirred up in his breast such a swift and sharp hostility. He lavished the deadly cyanide upon that portion of the plate, too, with grim unction, and noted the results with a scornful curl on his lip. Like his partner downstairs, he was wondering what on earth possessed Miss Parmalee to take up with a Dwight Ransom. The frown was still on his

brow when he opened the dark-room door. Then he started back, flushed red, and labored at an embarrassed smile. Miss Parmalee had left her place, and stood right in front of him, so near that he almost ran against her. She beamed confidently and reassuringly upon him.

"Oh, I want to come in and see you do all that," she exclaimed, with vivacity. "It didn't occur to me till after you'd shut the door, or I'd have asked to come in with you. I have the greatest curiosity about all these matters. Oh, it is all done? That's too bad! But you can make another one—and that I can see from the beginning. You know, I'm something of an artist myself; I've taken lessons for years—and this all interests me so much! No, Lieutenant!"—she called out from where she was standing just inside the open door, at sound of her companion's rising—"you stay where you are! There's going to be another, and it's such trouble to get you posed properly. Try and keep exactly as you were!"

Thus it happened that she stood very close to Marsena, as he took out another plate, flooded it with the sweet-smelling, pungent collodion, and, with furtive precautions against the light, lowered it down into the silver bath. Then he had to shut the door, and she was still

there just beside him. He heard himself pretending to explain the processes of the films to her, but his mind was concentrated instead upon a suggestion of perfume which she had brought into the reeking little cupboard of a room, and which mingled languorously with the scents of ether and creosote in the air. He had known her by sight for but a couple of months; he had been introduced to her only a week or so ago, and that in the most casual way; yet, strange enough, he could feel his hand trembling as it perfunctorily moved the plate dipper up and down in the bath.

A gentle voice fell upon the darkness. "Do you know, Mr. Pulford," it murmured, "I felt sure that you were an artist, the very first time I saw you."

Marsena heaved a long sigh—a sigh with a tremulous catch in it, as where sorrow and sweet solace should meet. "I did start out to be one," he answered, "but I—I never amounted to anything at it. I tried for years, but I wasn't any good. I had to give it up—at last—and take to this instead."

He lifted the plate with caution, bent to look obliquely across its surface, and lowered it again. Then all at once he turned abruptly and faced her. They were so close to each

other that even in the obscure gloom she caught the sudden flash of resolution in his eyes.

"I'll tell you what I never told any other living soul," he said, beginning with husky eagerness, but lapsing now into grave deliberation of emphasis: "I hate — this — like pizen!"

In the silence which followed, Marsena mechanically took the plate from the bath, fastened it in the holder, and stepped to the door. Then he halted, to prolong for one little instant this tender spell of magic which had stolen over him. Here, in the close darkness beside him, was a sorceress, a siren, who had at a glance read his sore heart's deepest secret—at a word drawn the confession of his maimed and embittered pride. It was like being shut up with an angel, who was also a beautiful woman. Oh, the wonder of it! Broad sunlit landscapes with Italian skies seemed to be forming themselves before his mind's eye; his soul sang songs within him. He very nearly dropped the plate-holder.

The soft, hovering, half touch of a hand upon his arm, the cool, restful tones of the voice in the darkness, came to complete the witchery.

"I know," she said, "I can sympathize

with you. I also had my dreams, my aspirations. But you are wrong to think that you have failed. Why, this beautiful work of yours, it all is Art—pure Art. No person who really knows could look at it and not see that. No, Mr. Pulford, you do yourself an injustice; believe me, you do. Why, you couldn't help being an artist if you tried; it's born in you. It shows in everything you do. I saw it from the very first."

The unmistakable sound of Dwight Ransom's large artillery boots moving on the floor outside intervened here, and Marsena hurriedly opened the door. The Lieutenant glanced with good-natured raillery at the couple who stood revealed, blinking in the sharp light.

"One of my legs got asleep," he remarked, by way of explanation, "so I had to get up and stamp around. I began to think," he added, "that you folks were going to set up housekeeping in there, and not come out any more at all."

"Don't be vulgar, if you please," said Julia Parmalee, with a dash of asperity in what purported to be a bantering tone. "We were talking of matters quite beyond you—of Art, if you desire to know. Mr. Pulford and I discover that we have a great many opinions and

sentiments about Art in common. It is a feeling that no one can understand unless they have it."

"It's the same with getting one's leg asleep," said Dwight, "quite the same, I assure you;" and then came the laughter which Newton Shull heard downstairs.

III.

A DAY or two later Battery G left Octavius for the seat of war.

It was not nearly so imposing an event as a good many others which had stirred the community during the previous twelve months. There were already two regiments in the field recruited from our end of Dearborn County, and in these at least six or seven companies were made up wholly of Octavius men. There had been big crowds, with speeches and music by the band, to see them off at the old depot.

When they returned, their short term of service having expired, there were still more fervent demonstrations, to which zest was added by the knowledge that they were all to enlist again, and then we shortly celebrated their second departure. Some there were who returned in mute and cold finality—term of enlistment and life alike cut short—and these were borne through our streets with sombre martial pageantry, the long wail of the funeral march reaching out to include the whole valley side in its

note of lamentation. Besides all this, hardly a week passed that those of us who hung about the station could not see a train full of troops on their way to or from the South. A year of these experiences had left us seasoned veterans in sightseeing, by no means to be fluttered by trifles.

As a matter of fact, the village did not take Battery G very seriously. To begin with, it mustered only some dozen men, at least so far as our local contribution went, and there was a feeling that we couldn't be expected to go much out of our way for such a paltry number. Then, again, an artillery force was somehow out of joint with our notion of what Octavius should do to help suppress the Rebellion. Infantrymen with muskets we could all understand—could all be, if necessary. Many of the farmer boys round about, too, made good cavalrymen, because they knew both how to ride and how to groom a horse. But in the name of all that was mysterious, why artillerymen? There had never been a cannon within fifty miles of Octavius; that is, since the Revolution. Certainly none of our citizens had the least idea how to fire one off. These enlisted men of Battery G were no better posted than the rest; it would take them a three days'

journey to reach the point where for the first time they were to see their strange weapon of warfare. This seemed to us rather foolish.

Moreover, there was a government proclamation just out, it was said, discontinuing further enlistments and disbanding the recruiting offices scattered over the North. This appeared to imply that the war was about over, or at least that they had more soldiers already than they knew what to do with. There were some who questioned whether, under these circumstances, it was worth while for Battery G to go at all.

But go it did, and at the last moment quite a throng of people found themselves gathered at the station to say good-by. A good many of these were the relations and friends of the dozen ordinary recruits, who would not even get their uniforms and swords till they reached Tecumseh. But the larger portion, I should think, had come on account of Lieutenant Ransom.

Dwight was hail-fellow-well-met with more people within a radius of twenty miles or so, probably, than any other man in the district. He was a good-looking young man, rather stocky in build and deeply sunburned. Through the decent months of the year he was always

out of doors, either tramping over the country with a level over his shoulder, or improving the days with a shotgun or fishpole. At these seasons he was generally to be found of an evening at the barber's shop, where he told more new stories than any one else. When winter came his chief work was in his office, drawing maps and plans. He let his beard grow then, and spent his leisure for the most part playing checkers at the Excelsior Hotel.

His habitual free-and-easy dress and amiable laxity of manners tended to obscure in the village mind the facts that he came from one of the best families of the section, that he had been through college, and that he had some means of his own. His mother and sisters were very respectable people indeed, and had one of the most expensive pews in the Episcopal Church. It was not observed, however, that Dwight ever accompanied them thither or that he devoted much of his time to their society at home. It began to be remarked, here and there, that it was getting to be about time for Dwight Ransom to steady down, if he was ever going to. Although everybody liked him and was glad to see him about, an impression was gradually shaping itself that he never would amount to much.

All at once Dwight staggered the public consciousness by putting on his best clothes one Sunday and going with his folks to church. Those who saw him on the way there could not make it out at all, except on the hypothesis that there had been a death in the family. Those who encountered him upon his return from the sacred edifice, however, found a clue to the mystery ready made. He was walking home with Julia Parmalee.

There were others whose passionate desire it was to walk home with Julia. They had been enlivening Octavius with public displays of their rivalry for something like two months when Dwight appeared on the scene as a competitor. Easy-going as he was in ordinary matters, he revealed himself now to be a hustler in the courts of love. It took him but a single day to drive the teller of the bank from the field. The Principal of the Seminary, a rising young lawyer, and the head bookkeeper at the freight-house, severally went by the board within a fortnight.

There remained old Dr. Conger's son Emory, who was of a tougher fibre and gave Dwight several added weeks of combat. He enjoyed the advantage of having nothing whatever to do. He possessed, moreover, a remarkably

varied wardrobe and white hands, and loomed unique among the males of our town in his ability to play on the piano. With such aids a young man may go far in a quiet neighborhood, and for a time Emory Conger certainly seemed to be holding his own, if not more. His discomfiture, when it came, was dramatic in its swift completeness. One forenoon we saw Dwight on the street in a new and resplendent officer's uniform, and learned that he had been commissioned to raise a battery. That very evening the doctor's son left town, and the news went round that Lieutenant Ransom was engaged to Miss Parmalee.

An impression prevailed that Dwight would not have objected to let the matter rest there. He had gained his point, and might well regard the battery and the War itself as things which had served their purpose and could now be dispensed with. No one would have blamed him much for feeling that way about it.

But this was not Julia's view. She adopted the battery for her own while it was still little more than a name, and swept it forward with such a swirling rush of enthusiasm that the men were all enlisted, the organization settled, and the date of departure for the front sternly fastened, before anybody could lay a hand to the

brakes. Her St. Mark's Ladies' Aid Society presented Dwight with a sword. Her branch of the Sanitary Commission voted to entertain the battery with a hot meal in the depot yard before it took the train. We have seen how she went and had herself photographed standing proudly behind the belted and martial Dwight. After these things it was impossible for Battery G to back out.

The artillerymen had a bright blue sky and a warm sunlit noontide for their departure. Even the most cynical of those who had come to see them off yielded toward the end to the genial influence of the weather and the impulse of good-fellowship, and joined in the hand-shaking at the car windows, and in the volley of cheers which were raised as the train drew slowly out of the yard.

At this moment the ladies of the Sanitary Commission had to bestir themselves to save the remnant of oranges and sandwiches on their tables from the swooping raid of the youth of Octavius, and, what with administering cuffs and shakings, and keeping their garments out of the way of coffee-cups overturned in the scramble, had no time to watch Julia Parmalee.

The men gathered in the yard kept her steadily in view, however, as she stood promi-

nently in front of the throng, on the top of a baggage truck, and waved her handkerchief until the train had dwindled into nothingness down the valley. These observers had an eye also on three young men who had got as near this truck as possible. Interest in Dwight and his battery was already giving place to curiosity as to which of these three—the bank-teller, the freight-house clerk, or the rising young lawyer —would win the chance of helping Julia down off her perch.

No one was prepared for what really happened. Miss Parmalee turned and looked thoughtfully, one might say abstractedly, about her. Somehow she seemed not to see any of the hands which were eagerly uplifted toward her. Instead, her musing gaze roved lightly over the predatory scuffle among the tables, over the ancient depot building, over the assembled throng of citizens in the background, then wandered nearer, with the pretty inconsequence of a butterfly's flight. Of course it was the farewell to Dwight which had left that soft, rosy flush in her dark, round cheeks. The glance that she was sending idly fluttering here and there did not seem so obviously connected with the Lieutenant. Of a sudden it halted and went into a smile.

"Oh, Mr. Pulford! May I trouble you?" she said in very distinct tones, bending forward over the edge of the truck, and holding forth two white and most shapely hands.

Marsena was standing fully six feet away. Like the others, he had been looking at Miss Parmalee, but with no hint of expectation in his eyes. This abrupt summons seemed to surprise him even more than it did the crowd. He started, changed color, fixed a wistful, almost pleading stare upon the sunlit vacancy just above the head of the enchantress, and confusedly fumbled with his glove tips, as if to make bare his hands for this great function. Then, straightening himself, he slowly moved toward her like one in a trance.

The rivals edged out of Marsena's way in dumfounded silence, as if he had been walking in his sleep, and waking were dangerous. He came up, made a formal bow, and lifted his gloved hands in chivalrous pretence of guiding the graceful little jump which brought Miss Parmalee to the ground—all with a pale, motionless face upon which shone a solemn ecstasy.

It was Marsena's habit, when out of doors, to carry his right hand in the breast of his frock-coat. As he made an angle of his elbow

now, from sheer force of custom, Julia promptly took the movement as a proffer of physical support, and availed herself of it. Marsena felt himself thrilling from top to toe at the touch of her hand upon his sleeve. If there rose in his mind an awkward consciousness that this sort of thing was unusual in Octavius by daylight, the embarrassment was only momentary. He held himself proudly erect, and marched out of the depot yard with Miss Parmalee on his arm.

As Homer Sage remarked that evening on the stoop of the Excelsior Hotel, this event made the departure of Battery G seem by comparison very small potatoes indeed.

It was impossible for the twain not to realize that everybody was looking at them, as they made their way up the shady side of the main street. But there is another language of the hands than that taught in deaf-mute schools, and Julia's hand seemed to tell Marsena's arm distinctly that she didn't care a bit. As for him, after that first nervous minute or two, the experience was all joy—joy so profound and overwhelming that he could only ponder it in dazzled silence. It is true that Julia was talking—rattling on with sprightly volubility about all sorts of things—but to Marsena her remarks

no more invited answers than does so much enthralling music. When she stopped for a breath he did not remember what she had been saying. He only knew how he felt.

"I wish you'd come straight to the gallery with me," he said; "I'd like first-rate to make a real picture of you—by yourself."

"Well, I swow!" remarked Mr. Newton Shull, along in the later afternoon; "I didn't expect we'd make our salt to-day, with Marsena away pretty near the whole forenoon, and all the folks down to the depot, and here it turns out way the best day we've had yet. Actually had to send people away!"

"Guess that didn't worry him much," commented the boy, from where he sat on the work-bench swinging his legs in idleness.

Mr. Shull nodded his head suggestively. "No, I dare say not," he said. "I kind o' begrudge not bein' an operator myself, when such setters as that come in. She must have been up there a full two hours—them two all by themselves—and the countrymen loafin' around out in the reception-room there, stompin' their feet and grindin' their teeth, jest tired to death o' waitin'. It went agin my grain to tell them last two lots they'd have to come some other

day; but—I dunno—perhaps it's jest as well. They'll go and tell it around that we've got more'n we can do—and that's good for business. But, all the same, it seemed to me as if he took considerable more time than was really needful. He can turn out four farmers in fifteen minutes, if he puts on a spurt; and here he was a full two hours, and only five pictures of her to show for it."

"Six," said the boy.

"Yes, so it was—countin' the one with her hair let down," Mr. Shull admitted. "I dunno whether that one oughtn't to be a little extry. I thought o' tellin' her that it would be, on account of so much hair consumin' more chemicals; but—I dunno'—somehow—she sort o' looked as if she knew better. Did you ever notice them eyes o' hern, how they look as if they could see straight through you, and out on the other side?"

The boy shook his head. "I don't bother my head about women," he said. "Got somethin' better to do."

"Guess that's a pretty good plan too," mused Mr. Shull. "Somehow you can't seem to make 'em out at all. Now, I've been around a good deal, and yet somehow I don't feel as if I knew much about women. I'm bound to say,

though," he added upon reflection, "they know considerable about me."

"I suppose the first thing we know now," remarked the boy, impatiently changing the subject, "McClellan'll be in Richmond. They say it's liable to happen now any day."

Newton Shull was but a lukewarm patriot. "They needn't hurry on my account," he said. "It would be kind o' mean to have the whole thing fizzle out now, jest when the picture business has begun to amount to something. Why, we must have took in up'ards of $11 today—frames and all—and two years ago we'd a' been lucky to get in $3. Let's see: there's two fifties and five thirty-five's, that's $2.75, and the Dutch boy with the drum, that's $3.40, counting the mat, and then there's Miss Parmalee—four daguerreotypes, and two negatives, and small frames for each, and two large frames for crayons she's going to do herself, and cord and nails—I suppose she'll think them ought to be thrown in——"

"What! didn't you make her pay in advance?" asked the boy. "I thought everybody had to."

"You got to humor some folks," explained Mr. Shull, with a note of regret in his voice. "These big bugs with plenty o' money always

have to be waited on. It ain't right, but it has to be. Besides, you can always slide on an extra quarter or so when you send in the bill. That sort o' evens the thing up. Now, in her case, for instance, where we'd charge ordinary folks a dollar for two daguerreotypes, we can send her in a bill for——''

Neither Mr. Shull nor the boy had heard Marsena's descending steps on the staircase, yet at this moment he entered the little work-room and walked across it to the bay window, where the printing was done. There was an unusual degree of abstraction in his face and mien—unusual even for him—and he drummed absent-mindedly on the panes as he stood looking out at the street or the sky, or whatever it was his listless gaze beheld.

"How much do you think it 'ud be safe to stick Miss Parmalee apiece for them daguerreotypes?'' asked Newton Shull of his partner.

Marsena turned and stared for a moment as if he doubted having heard aright. Then he made curt answer: "She is not to be charged anything at all. They were made for her as presents.''

It was the other partner's turn to stare.

"Well, of course—if you say it's all right,''

he managed to get out, "but I suppose on the frames we can——"

"The frames are presents, too," said Marsena, with decision.

IV.

DURING the fortnight or three weeks following the departure of Battery G it became clear to everyone that the War was as good as over. It had lasted already a whole year, but now the end was obviously at hand. The Union Army had the Rebels cooped up in Yorktown — the identical place where the British had been compelled to surrender at the close of the Revolution—and it was impossible that they should get away. The very coincidence of locality was enough in itself to convince the most skeptical.

We read that Fitz John Porter had a balloon fastened by a rope, in which he daily went up and took a look through his field-glasses at the Rebels, all miserably huddled together in their trap, awaiting their doom. Our soldiers wrote home now that final victory could only be a matter of a few weeks, or months at the most. Some of them said they would surely be home by haying time. Their letters no longer dwelt

upon battles, or the prospect of battles, but gossiped about the jealousies and quarrels among our generals, who seemed to dislike one another much more than they did the common enemy, and told us long and quite incredible tales about the mud in Virginia. No soldier's letter that spring was complete without a chapter on the mud. There were stories about mules and their contraband drivers being bodily sunk out of sight in these weltering seas of mire, and of new boots being made for the officers to come up to their armpits, which we hardly knew whether to believe or not. But about the fact that peace was practically within view there could be no doubt.

Under the influence of this mood, Miss Parmalee's ambitious project for a grand fair and festival in aid of the Field Hospital and Nurse Fund naturally languished. If the War was coming to a close so soon, there could be no use in going to so much worry and trouble, to say nothing of the expense.

Miss Julia seemed to take this view of it herself. She ceased active preparations for the fair, and printed in the Thessaly *Banner of Liberty* a beautiful poem over her own name entitled "The Dove-like Dawn of White-winged Peace." She also got herself some

new and summery dresses, of gay tints and very fashionable form, and went to be photographed in each. Her almost daily presence at the gallery came, indeed, to be a leading topic of conversation in Octavius. Some said that she was taking lessons of Marsena—learning to make photographs—but others put a different construction on the matter and winked as they did so.

As for Marsena, he moved about the streets these days with his head among the stars, in a state of rapt and reverent exaltation. He had never been what might be called a talker, but now it was as much as the best of us could do to get any kind of word from him. He did not seem to talk to Julia any more than to the general public, but just luxuriated with a dumb solemnity of joy in her company, sitting sometimes for hours beside her on the piazza of the Parmalee house, or focusing her pretty image with silent delight on the ground glass of his best camera day after day, or walking with her, arm in arm, to the Episcopal church on Sundays. He had always been a Presbyterian before, but now he bore himself in the prominent Parmalee pew at St. Mark's with stately correctness, rising, kneeling, seating himself, just as the others did, and helping Miss Julia hold her

Prayer Book with an air of having known the ritual from childhood.

No doubt a good many people felt that all this was rough on the absent Dwight Ransom, and probably some of them talked openly about it; but interest in this aspect of the case was swallowed up in the larger attention now given to Marsena Pulford himself. It began to be reported that he really came of an extraordinarily good family in New England, and that an uncle of his had been in Congress. The legend that he had means of his own did not take much root, but it was admitted that he must now be simply coining money. Some went so far as to estimate his annual profits as high as $1,500, which sounded to the average Octavian like a dream. It was commonly understood that he had abandoned an earlier intention to buy a house and lot of his own, and this clearly seemed to show that he counted upon going presently to live in the Parmalee mansion. People speculated with idle curiosity as to the likelihood of this coming to pass before the War ended and Battery G returned home.

Suddenly great and stirring news fell upon the startled North and set Octavius thrilling with excitement, along with every other community

far and near. It was in the first week or so of May that the surprise came ; the Rebels, whom we had supposed to be securely locked up in Yorktown, with no alternative save starvation or surrender, decided not to remain there any longer, and accordingly marched comfortably off in the direction of Richmond !

Quick upon the heels of this came tidings that the Union Army was in pursuit, and that there had been savage fighting with the Confederate rear-guard at Williamsburg. The papers said that the War, so far from ending, must now be fought all over again. The marvellous story of the Monitor and Merrimac sent our men folks into a frenzy of patriotic fervor. Our women learned with sinking hearts that the new Corps which included our Dearborn County regiments was to bear the brunt of the conflict in this changed order of things. We were all off again in a hysterical whirl of emotions—now pride, now horror, now bitter wrath on top.

In the middle of all this the famous Field Hospital and Nurse Fund Fair was held. The project had slumbered the while people thought peace so near. It sprang up with renewed and vigorous life the moment the echo of those guns at Williamsburg reached our ears. And of course at its head was Julia Parmalee.

It would take a long time and a powerful ransacking of memory to catalogue the remarkable things which this active young woman did toward making that fair the success it undoubtedly was. Even more notable were the things which she coaxed, argued, or shamed other folks into doing for it. Years afterward there were old people who would tell you that Octavius had never been quite the same place since.

For one thing, instead of the Fireman's Hall, with its dingy aspect and somewhat rowdyish associations, the fair was held in the Court House, and we all understood that Miss Julia had been able to secure this favor on account of her late uncle, the Judge, when anyone else would have been refused. It was under her tireless and ubiquitous supervision that this solemn old interior now took on a gay and festal face. Under the inspiration of her glance the members of the Fire Company and the Alert Baseball Club vied with each other in borrowing flags and hanging them from the most inaccessible and adventurous points. The rivalry between the local Freemasons and Odd Fellows was utilized to build temporary booths at the sides and down the centre—on a floor laid over the benches by the Carpenters' Benevolent Association. The ladies' organizations of the various churches, out

of devotion to the Union and jealousy of one another, did all the rest.

At the sides were the stalls for the sale of useful household articles, and sedate and elderly matrons found themselves now dragged from the mild obscurity of homes where they did their own work, and thrust forward to preside over the sales in these booths, while thrifty, not to say penurious, merchants came and stood around and regarded with amazement the merchandise which they had been wheedled into contributing gratis out of their own stores. The suggestion that they should now buy it back again paralyzed their faculties, and imparted a distinct restraint to the festivities at the sides of the big court-room.

In the centre was a double row of booths for the sale of articles not so strictly useful, and here the young people congregated. All the girls of Octavius seemed to have been gathered here—the pretty ones and the plain ones, the saucy ones and the shy, the maidens who were "getting along" and the damsels not yet out of their teens. Stiff, spreading crinolines brushed juvenile pantalettes, and the dark head of long, shaving-like ringlets contrasted itself with the bold waterfall of blonde hair. These girls did not know one another very well, save

by little groups formed around the nucleus of a church association, and very few of them knew Miss Parmalee at all, except, of course, by sight. But now, astonishing to relate, she recognized them by name as old friends, shook hands warmly right and left, and blithely set them all to work and at their ease. The idea of selling things to young men abashed them by its weird and unmaidenly novelty. She showed them how it should be done—bringing forward for the purpose a sheepishly obstinate drug-store clerk, and publicly dragooning him into paying eighty cents for a leather dog-collar, despite his protests that he had no dog and hated the whole canine species, and could get such a strap as that anywhere for fifteen cents—all amid the greatest merriment. Her influence was so pervasive, indeed, that even the nicest girls soon got into a state of giggling familiarity with comparative strangers, which gave their elders concern, and which in some cases it took many months to straighten out again. But for the time all was sparkling gaiety. On the second and final evening, after the oyster supper, the Philharmonics played and a choir of girls sang patriotic songs. Then the gas was turned down and the stereopticon show began.

As the last concerted achievement of the

firm of Pulford & Shull, this magic-lantern performance is still remembered. The idea of it, of course, was Julia's. She suggested it to Marsena, and he gladly volunteered to make any number of positive plates from appropriate pictures and portraits for the purpose. Then she pressed Newton Shull into the service to get a stereopticon on hire, to rig up the platform and canvas for it, and finally to consent to quit his post among the Philharmonics when the music ceased, and to go off up into the gallery to work the slides. He also, during Marsena's absence one day, made a slide on his own account.

Mr. Shull had not taken very kindly to the idea when Miss Julia first broached it to him.

"No, I don't know as I ever worked a stereopticon," he said, striving to look with cold placidity into the winsome and beaming smile with which she confronted him one day out in the reception-room. She had never smiled at him before or pretended even to know his name. "I guess you'd better hire a man up from Tecumseh to bring the machine and run it himself."

"But you can do it so much better, my dear Mr. Shull!" she urged. "You do everything so much better! Mr. Pulford often says

that he never knew such a handy man in all his life. It seems that there is literally nothing that you can't do—except—perhaps—refuse a lady a great personal favor."

Miss Julia put this last so delicately, and with such a pretty little arch nod of the head and turn of the eyes, that Newton Shull surrendered at discretion. He promised everything on the spot, and he kept his word. In fact, he more than kept it.

The great evening came, as I have said, and when the lights were turned down to extinction's verge those who were nearest the front could distinguish the vacant chair which Mr. Shull had been occupying, with his bass viol leaning against it. They whispered from one to another that he had gone up in the gallery to work this new-fangled contrivance. Then came a flashing broad disk of light on the screen above the judges' bench, a spreading sibilant murmur of interest, and the show began.

It was an oddly limited collection of pictures —mainly thin and feeble copies of newspaper engravings, photographic portraits, and ideal heads from the magazines. Winfield Scott followed in the wake of Kossuth, and Garibaldi led the way for John C. Frémont and

Lola Montez. There was applause for the long, homely, familiar face of Lincoln, and a derisive snicker for the likeness of Jeff Davis turned upside down. Then came local heroes from the district round about—Gen. Boyce, Col. McIntyre, and young Adjt. Heron, who had died so bravely at Ball's Bluff—mixed with some landscapes and statuary, and a comic caricature or two. The rapt assemblage murmured its recognitions, sighed its deeper emotions, chuckled over the funny plates—deeming it all a most delightful entertainment. From time to time there were long hitches, marked by a curious spluttering noise above, and the abortive flashes of meaningless light on the screen, and the explanation was passed about in undertones that Mr. Shull was having difficulties with the machine.

It was after the longest of these delays that, all at once, an extremely vivid picture was jerked suddenly upon the canvas, and, after a few preliminary twitches, settled in place to stare us out of countenance. There was no room for mistake. It was the portrait of Miss Julia Parmalee standing proudly erect in statuesque posture, with one hand resting on the back of a chair, and seated in this chair was Lieut. Dwight Ransom, smiling amiably.

There was a moment's deadly hush, while we gazed at this unlooked-for apparition. It seemed, upon examination, as if there was a certain irony in the Lieutenant's grin. Someone in the darkness emitted an abrupt snort of amusement, and a general titter arose, hung in the air for an awkward instant, and then was drowned by a generous burst of applause. While the people were still clapping their hands the picture was withdrawn from the screen, and we heard Newton Shull call down from his perch in the gallery:

"You kin turn up the lights now. They ain't no more to this."

In another minute we were sitting once again in the broad glare of the gaslight, blinking confusedly at one another, and with a dazed consciousness that something rather embarrassing had happened. The boldest of us began to steal glances across to where Miss Parmalee and Marsena sat, just in front of the steps to the bench.

What Miss Julia felt was beyond guessing, but there she was, at any rate, bending over and talking vivaciously, all smiles and collected nerves, to a lady two seats removed. But Marsena displayed no such presence of mind. He sat bolt upright, with an extraordinarily white

face and a drooping jaw, staring fixedly at the empty canvas on the wall before him. Such absolute astonishment was never depicted on human visage before.

Perhaps from native inability to mind his own business, perhaps with a kindly view of saving an anxious situation, the Baptist minister rose now to his feet, coughed loudly to secure attention, and began some florid remarks about the success of the fair, the especial beauty of the lantern exhibition they had just witnessed, and the felicitous way in which it had terminated with a portrait of the beautiful and distinguished young lady to whose genius and unwearying efforts they were all so deeply indebted. In these times of national travail and distress, he said, there was a peculiar satisfaction in seeing her portrait accompanied by that of one of the courageous and noble young men who had sprung to the defence of their country. The poet had averred, he continued, that none but the brave deserved the fair, and so on, and so on.

Miss Julia listened to it all with her head on one side and a modestly deprecatory half-smile on her face. At its finish she rose, turned to face everybody, made a pert, laughing little bow, and sat down again, apparently all happi-

ness. But it was noted that Marsena did not take his pained and fascinated gaze from that mocking white screen on the wall straight in front.

They walked in silence that evening to almost the gate of the Parmalee mansion. Julia had taken his arm, as usual; but Marsena could not but feel that the touch was different. It was in the nature of a relief to him that for once she did not talk. His heart was too sore, his brain too bewildered, for the task of even a one-sided conversation, such as theirs was wont to be. Then all at once the silence grew terrible to him—a weight to be lifted at all hazards on the instant.

"Shull must have made that last slide himself," he blurted out. "I never dreamt of its being made."

"I thought it came out very well indeed," remarked Miss Parmalee, "especially his uniform. You could quite see the eagles on the buttons. You must thank Mr. Shull for me."

"I'll speak to him in the morning about it," said Marsena, with gloomy emphasis. He sighed, bit his lip, fixed an intent gaze upon the big dark bulk of the Parmalee house looming before them, and spoke again. "There's

something that I want to say to *you*, though, that won't keep till morning."

A tiny movement of the hand on his arm was the only response.

"I see now," Marsena went on, "that I ain't been making any real headway with you at all. I thought—well—I don't know as I know just what I did think—but I guess now that it was a mistake."

Yes—there was a distinct flutter of the little gloved hand. It put a wild thought into Marsena's head.

"Would you," he began boldly—"I never spoke of it before—but would you—that is, if I was to enlist and go to the War — would that make any difference?—you know what I mean."

She looked up at him with magnetic sweetness in her dusky, shadowed glance. "How can any able-bodied young patriot hesitate at such a time as this?" she made answer, and pressed his arm.

V.

IT was in this same May, not more than a week after the momentous episode of the Field Hospital and Nurse Fund Fair, that Marsena Pulford went off to the War.

There was no ostentation about his departure. He had indeed been gone for a day or two before it became known in Octavius that his absence from town meant that he had enlisted down at Tecumseh. We learned that he had started as a common private, but everybody made sure that a man of his distinguished appearance and deportment would speedily get a commission. Everybody, too, had a theory of some sort as to the motives for this sudden and strange behavior of his. These theories agreed in linking Miss Parmalee with the affair, but there were hopeless divergencies as to the exact part she played in it. One party held that Marsena had been driven to seek death on the tented field by despair at having been given the "mitten." Others insisted that he had not been given the "mitten" at all, but

had gone because her well-known martial ardor made the sacrifice of her betrothed necessary to her peace of mind. A minority took the view which Homer Sage promulgated from his tilted-back chair on the stoop of the Excelsior Hotel.

"They ain't nothin' settled betwixt 'em," this student of human nature declared. "She jest dared him to go, and he went. And if you only give her time, she'll have the whole male unmarried population of Octavius, between the ages of sixteen and sixty, down there wallerin' around in the Virginny swamps, feedin' the muskeeters and makin' a bid for glory."

But in a few days there came the terribly exciting news of Seven Pines and Fair Oaks—that first great combat of the revived war in the East—and we ceased to bother our heads about the photographer and his love. The enlisting fever sprang up again, and our young men began to make their way by dozens and scores to the recruiting office at Tecumseh. There were more farewells, more tears and prayers, not to mention several funerals of soldiers killed at Hanover Court House, where that Fifth Corps, which contained most of our volunteers, had its first spring smell of blood. And soon there-

after burst upon us the awful sustained carnage of the Seven Days' fighting, which drove out of our minds even the recollection that Miss Julia Parmalee herself had volunteered for active service in the Sanitary Commission, and gone South to take up her work.

And so July 3d came, bringing with it the bare tidings of that closing desperate battle of the week at Malvern Hill, and the movement of what was left of the Army of the Potomac to a safe resting place on the James River. We were beginning to get the details of local interest by the slow single wire from Thessaly, and sickening enough they were. The village streets were filled with silent, horror-stricken crowds. The whole community seemed to have but a single face, repeated upon the mental vision at every step — a terrible face with distended, empty eyes, riven brows, and an open drawn mouth like the old Greek mask of tragedy.

"I swan! I don't know whether to keep open to-morrow or not," said Mr. Newton Shull, for perhaps the twentieth time, as he wandered once again from the reception-room into the little workshop behind. "In some ways it's kind of agin my principles to work on Independence Day—but, then again, if I

thought there was likely to be a good many farmers comin' into town——"

"They'll be plenty of 'em coming in," said the boy, over his shoulder, "but they'll steer clear of here."

"I'm 'fraid so," sighed Mr. Shull. He advanced a listless step or two and gazed with dejected apathy at the newspaper map tacked to the wall, on which the boy was making red and blue crosses with a colored pencil. "I don't see much good o' that," he said. "Still, of course, if it eases your mind any——"

"That's where the fightin' finished," observed the boy, pointing to a big mark on the map. "That's Malvern Hill there, and here—down where the river takes the big bend—that's Harrison's Landing, where the army's movin' to. See them seven rings? Them are the battles, one each day, as our men forced their way down through the Chickahominy swamps, beginnin' up in the corner with Beaver Dam Creek. If the map was a little higher it 'ud show the Pamunkey, where they started from. My uncle says that the whole mistake was in ever abandoning the Pamunkey."

"Pa-monkey or Ma-monkey," said Newton Shull, gloomily, "it wouldn't be no comfort to me to see it, even on a map. It's jest taken and

busted me and my business here clean as a whistle. We ain't paid expenses two days in a week sence Marseny went. Here I've got now so't I kin take a plain, everyday sort o' picture jest about as well as he did—a little streakid sometimes, perhaps, and more or less pinholes —but still pretty middlin' fair on an average, and then, darn my buttons if they don't all stop comin'. It positively don't seem to me as if there was a single human bein' in Dearborn County that 'ud have his picture took as a gift. All they want now is to have enlargements thrown up from little likenesses of their men folks that have been killed, and them I don't know how to do no more'n a babe unborn."

"You knew well enough how to make that stereopticon slide," remarked the boy with severity.

"Yes," mused Mr. Shull, "that darned thing—that made a peck o' trouble, didn't it? I dunno what on earth possessed me; I kind o' seemed to git the notion of doin' it into my head all to once't, and somehow I never dreamt of its rilin' Marseny so; you couldn't tell that a man 'ud be so blamed touchy as all that, could you?—and I dunno, like as not he'd a' enlisted any how. But I do wish he'd showed me how to make them pesky enlargements afore

he went. If I'd only seen him do one, even once, I could a' picked the thing up, but I never did. It's just my luck ! "

"Say," said the boy, looking up with a sudden thought, "do you know what my mother heard yesterday? It's all over the place that before Marseny left he went to Squire Schermerhorn's and made his will, and left everything he's got to the Parmalee girl, in case he gits killed. So, if anything happens she'd be your partner, wouldn't she? "

Newton Shull stared with surprise. "Well, now, that beats creation," he said, after a little. "Somehow you know that never occurred to me, and yet, of course, that 'ud be jest his style."

"Yes, sir," repeated the other, "they say he's left her every identical thing."

"It's allus that way in this world," reflected Mr. Shull, sadly. "Them that don't need it one solitary atom, they're eternally gettin' every mortal thing left to 'em. Why, that girl's so rich already she don't know what to do with her money. If I was her, I bet a cooky I wouldn't go pikin' off to the battlefield, doin' nursin' and tyin' on bandages, and fannin' men while they were gittin' their legs cut off. No, sirree; I'd let the Sanitary Com-

mission scuffle along without me, I can tell you! A hoss and buggy and a fust-class two-dollar-a-day hotel, and goin' to the theatre jest when I took the notion—that'd be good enough for me."

"I suppose the sign then 'nd be 'Shull & Parmalee,' wouldn't it?" queried the boy.

"Well, now, I ain't so sure about that," said Mr. Shull, thoughtfully. "It might be that, bein' a woman, her name 'nd come first, out o' politeness. But then, of course, most prob'ly she'd want to sell out instid, and then I'd make the valuation, and she could give me time. Or she might want to stay in, only on the quiet, you know—what they call a silent partner."

"Nobody 'd ever call her a silent partner," observed the boy. "She couldn't keep still if she tried."

"I wouldn't care how much she talked," said Mr. Shull, "if she only put enough more money into the business. I didn't take much to her, somehow, along at fust, but the more I've seen of her the more I like the cut of her jib. She's got 'go' in her, that gal has; she jest figures out what she wants, and then she sails in and gits it. It don't matter who the man is, she jest takes and winds him round her

little finger. Why, Marseny, here, he wasn't no more than so much putty in her hands. I lost all patience with him. You wouldn't catch me being run by a woman that way."

"So far's I could see," suggested the other, "she seemed to git pretty much all she wanted out of you, too. You were dancin' round, helpin' her at the fair there, like a hen on a hot griddle."

"It was all on his account," put in the partner, with emphasis. "Jest to please him; he seemed so much sot on her bein' humored in everything. I did feel kind o' foolish about it at the time—I never somehow believed much in doin' work for nothin'—but maybe it was all for the best. If what they say about his makin' a will is true, why it won't do me no harm to be on good terms with her—in case—in case——"

Mr. Shull was standing at the window, and his idle gaze had been vaguely taking in the general prospect of the street below the while he spoke. At this moment he discovered that some one on the opposite sidewalk was making vehement gestures to attract his attention. He lifted the sash and put his head out to listen, but the message came across loud enough for even the boy inside to hear.

"You'd better hurry round to the telegraph office!" this hoarse, anonymous voice cried. "Malvern Hill list is a-comin' in—and they say your pardner's been shot—shot bad, too!"

Newton Shull drew in his head and stood for some moments staring blankly at the map on the wall. "Well, I swan!" he began, with confused hesitation, "I dunno—it seems to me—well, yes, I guess prob'ly the best thing'll be for her to put more money into the business—yes, that's the plan—and we kin hire an operator up from Tecumseh."

But there was no one to pass an opinion on his project. The boy had snatched his hat, and could be heard even now dashing his way furiously down the outer stairs.

. . . . . .

The summer dusk had begun to gather before Octavius heard all that was to be learned of the frightful calamity which had befallen its absent sons. The local roll of death and disaster from Gaines's Mill earlier in the week had seemed incredibly awful. This new budget of horrors from Malvern was far worse.

"Wa'n't the rest of the North doin' anything at all?" a wild-eyed, disheveled old farmer cried out in a shaking, half-frenzied shriek from the press of the crowd round the

telegraph office. "Do they think Dearborn County's got to suppress this whole damned rebellion single-handed?"

It seemed to the dazed and horrified throng as if some such idea must be in the minds of the rest of the Union. Surely no other little community—or big community, either—could have had such a hideous blow dealt to it as this under which Octavius reeled. The list of the week for the county, including Gaines's Mill, showed one hundred and eight men dead outright, and very nearly five hundred more wounded in battle. It was too shocking for comprehension.

As evening drew on, men gathered the nerve to say to one another that there was something very glorious in the way the two regiments had been thrust into the front, and had shown themselves heroically fit for that grim honor. They tried, too, to extract solace from the news that the regiments in question had been mentioned by name in the general despatches as having distinguished themselves and their county above all the rest—but it was an empty and heart-sickened pretense at best, and when, about dark, the women folks, who had waited in vain for them to come home to supper, began to appear on the skirts of the crowd, it was

given up altogether. In after years Octavius got so that it could cheer those sinister names of Gaines's Mill and Malvern Hill, and swell with pride at the memories they evoked. But that evening no one cheered. It was too terrible.

There was, indeed, a single partial exception to this rule. The regular service of news had ceased—in those days, before the duplex invention, the single wire had most melancholy limitations—but the throng still lingered; and when, in the failing light, the postmaster was seen to step up again on the chair by the door with a bit of paper in his hand, a solemn hush ran over the assemblage.

"It is a private telegram sent to me personally," he explained, in the loud, clear tones of one who had earned his office by years of stump speaking; "but it is intended for you all, I should presume."

The silent crowd pushed nearer, and listened with strained attention as this despatch was read:

HEADQUARTERS SANITARY COMMISSION,
HARRISON'S LANDING, VA., Wednesday Morning.
TO POSTMASTER OCTAVIUS, N. Y.:

No words can describe magnificent record soldiers of Dearborn County, especially Starbuck, made past week.

I bless fate which identified my poor services with such superb heroism. After second sleepless night, Col. Starbuck now reposing peacefully; doctor says crisis past; he surely recover, though process be slow. You will learn with pride he been brevetted Brigadier, fact which it was my privilege to announce to him last evening. He feebly thanked me, murmuring, "Tell them at home."

"JULIA PARMALEE."

In the silence which ensued the postmaster held the paper up and scanned it narrowly by the waning light. "There is something else," he said—"Oh, yes, I see; 'Franked despatch Sanitary Commission.' That's all."

Another figure was seen suddenly clambering upon the chair, with an arm around the postmaster for support. It was the teller of the bank. He waved his free arm excitedly, as he faced the crowd, and cried:

"Our women are as brave as our men! Three cheers for Miss Julia Parmalee! Hip-hip!"

The loyal teller's first "Hurrah!" fell upon the air quite by itself. Perhaps a dozen voices helped him half-heartedly with the second. The third died off again miserably, and he stepped down off the chair amid a general consciousness of failure.

"Who the hell is Starbuck?" was to be

heard in whispered interrogatory passed along through the throng. Hardly anybody could answer. Boyce we knew, and McIntyre, and many others, but Starbuck was a mystery. Then it was explained that it must be the son of old Alanson Starbuck, of Juno Mills, who had gone away to Philadelphia seven or eight years before. He had not enlisted with any Dearborn County regiment, but held a staff appointment of some kind, presumably in a Pennsylvania command. We were quite unable to work up any emotion over him.

In fact, the more we thought it over, the more we were disposed to resent this planting of Starbuck upon us, in the very van of Dearborn County's heroes. His father was a rich old curmudgeon, whom no one liked. The son was nothing to us whatever.

As at last, in the deepening twilight, the people reluctantly began moving toward home, such conversation as they had the heart for seemed to be exclusively centred upon Miss Parmalee, and this queer despatch of hers. Slow-paced, strolling groups wended their way along the main street, and then up this side thoroughfare and that, passing in every block some dark and close-shuttered house of mourning, and instinctively sinking still lower their

muffled tones as they passed, and carrying in their breasts, heaven only knows what torturing loads of anguish and stricken despair—but finding a certain relief in dwelling, instead, upon this lighter topic.

One of these groups—an elderly lady in black attire and two younger women of sober mien—walked apart from the others and exchanged no words at all until, turning a corner, their way led them past the Parmalee house. The looming bulk of the old mansion and the fragrant spaciousness of the garden about it seemed to attract the attention of Mrs. Ransom and her daughters. They halted as by a common impulse, and fastened a hostile gaze upon the shadowy outlines of the house and its surrounding foliage.

"If Dwight dies of his wound," the mother said, in a voice all chilled to calmness, "his murderess will live in there."

"I always hated her!" said one of the daughters, with a shudder.

"But he isn't going to die, mamma," put in the other. "You mustn't think of such a thing! You know how healthy he always has been, and this is only his shoulder. For my part, we may think ourselves very fortunate. Remember how many have been killed or mor-

tally wounded. It seems as if half the people we know are in mourning. We get off very lightly with Dwight only wounded. Did you happen to hear the details about Mr. Pulford? —you know, the photographer—someone was saying that he was mortally wounded."

"She sent him to his death, then, too," said the elder Miss Ransom, raising her clenched hand against the black shadow of the house.

"I don't care about that man," broke in the mother, icily. "Nobody knows anything of him, or where he came from. People ran after him because he was good-looking, but he never seemed to me to know enough to come in when it rained. If she made a fool of him, it was his own lookout. But Dwight — my Dwight——!"

The mother's mannered voice broke into a gasp, and she bent her head helplessly. The daughters went to her side, and the group passed on into the darkness.

VI.

IT was a dark, soft, summer night in Virginia, that of the 1st of July. After the tropical heat of the day, the air was being mercifully cooled, here on the hilltop, by a gentle breeze, laden with just a moist suggestion of the mist rising from the river flats and marshes down below. It was not Mother Nature's fault that this zephyr stirring along the parched brow of the hill did not bear with it, too, the scents of fruits and flowers, of new-mown hay and the yellow grain in shock, and minister soothingly to rest and pleasant dreams.

Instead, this breeze, moving mildly in the darkness, was one vile, embodied stench of sulphur and blood, and pestilential abominations. Go where you would, there was no escaping this insufferable burden of foul smells. If they were a horror on the hilltop, they were worse below.

It was one of the occasions on which Man had expended all his powers to prove his superiority to Nature. The elements in their wild-

est and most savage mood could never have wrought such butchery as this. The vine-wrapped fences, stretching down from the plateau toward the meadow lands below, were buttressed by piles of dead men, some in butternut, some in blue. Clumps of stiffened bodies curled supine at the base of every stump on the fringe of the woodland to the right and among the tumbled sheaves of grain to the left. Out in the open, the broad, sloping hillside and the valley bottom lay literally hidden under ridge upon ridge of smashed and riddled human forms, and the heaped débris of human battle. The clouds hung thick and close above, as if to keep the stars from beholding this repellent sample of earth's titanic beast, Man, at his worst. An Egyptian blackness was over it all.

At intervals a lightning flash from the crest of the outermost knoll tore this evil pall of darkness asunder, and then, with a roar and a scream, a spluttering line of vivid flame would arch its sinister way across the sky. A thousand little dots of light moved and zigzagged ceaselessly on the wide expanse of obscurity underneath this crest, and when the bursts of wrathful fireworks came from overhead it could be seen that these were lanterns being borne about in and out among the winrows of

maimed and slain. Above all, through all, without even an instant's lull, there arose a terrible babel of chorused groans and prayers and howls and curses. This noise could be heard for miles—almost as far as the boom of the howitzers above could carry — and at a distance sounded like the moaning of a storm through a great pine-forest. Near at hand, it sounded like nothing else this side of hell.

An hour or so after nightfall the battery on the crest of the knoll stopped firing. The wails and shrieks from the slope below went on all through the night, and the lanterns of the search parties burned till the morning sunlight put them out.

Up on the top of the hill—a broad expanse of rolling plateaus—the scene wore a different aspect. At widely separated points bonfires and glittering lights showed where some general of the victorious army held his headquarters in a farm-house ; and unless one pried too curiously about these parts, there were few enough evidences on the summit of the day's barbaric doings.

The chief of these houses—a stately and ancient structure, built in colonial days of brick proudly brought from Europe—had begun the forenoon of the battle as the headquarters of

the Fifth Corps. Then the General and his staff had reduced their needs to a couple of rooms, to leave space for wounded men. Then they had moved out altogether, to let the whole house be used as a hospital. Then as the back-wash of calamity from the line of conflict swelled in size and volume, the stables and barns had been turned over to the medical staff. Later, as the savage evening fight went on, tons of new hay had been brought out and strewn in sheltered places under the open sky to serve as beds for the sufferers. Before night fell, even these impromptu hospitals were overtaxed, and rows of stricken soldiers lay on the bare ground.

The day of intelligent and efficient hospital service had not yet dawned for our army. The breakdown of what service we had had, under the frightful stress of the battles culminating in this blood-soaked Malvern Hill, is a matter of history, and it can be viewed the more calmly now as the collapse of itself brought about an improved condition of affairs. But at the time it was a woful thing, with a lax and conflicting organization, insufficient material, a ridiculous lack of nurses, a mere handful of really competent surgeons and, most of all, a great crowd of volunteer medical students and ignorant practitioners, who flocked southward for

the mere excitement and practice of sawing, cutting, slashing right and left. So it was that army surgery lent new terrors to death on the battle-field in the year 1862.

The sky overhead was just beginning to show the ashen touch of twilight, when two men lying stretched on the hay in a corner of the smaller barn-yard chanced to turn on their hard couch and to recognize each other. It was a slow and almost scowling recognition, and at first bore no fruit of words.

One was in the dress of a lieutenant of artillery, muddy and begrimed with smoke, and having its right shoulder torn or cut open from collar to elbow. The man himself had now such a waving, tangled growth of chestnut beard and so grimly blackened a face, that it would have been hard to place him as our easy-going, smiling Dwight Ransom.

The new movement had not brought ease, and now, after a few grunts of pain and impatience, he got himself laboriously up in a sitting posture, dragged a knapsack within reach up to support his back, and looked at his companion again.

"I heard that you were down here somewhere," he remarked, at last. "My sister wrote me."

Marsena Pulford stared up at him, made a little nodding motion of the head, and turned his glance again into the sky straight above. He also was a spectacle of dry mud and dust, and was bearded to the eyes.

"Where are you hit?" asked Dwight, after a pause.

For answer, Marsena slowly, and with an effort, put a hand to his breast—to the left, below the heart. "Here, somewhere," he said, in a low, dry-lipped murmur. He did not look at Dwight again, but presently asked, "Could you fix me—settin' up—too?"

"I guess so," responded Dwight. With the help of his unhurt arm he clambered to his feet and began moving dizzily about among the row of wounded men to his left. These groaned or snarled at him as he passed over them, but to this he paid no attention whatever. He returned from the end of the line, bringing two knapsacks and the battered frame of a drum, in which some one had been trying to carry water, and with some difficulty arranged these in a satisfactory heap. Then he knelt, pushed his arm under Marsena's shoulders, and lifted him up and backward to the support. Both men grimaced and winced under the smart of the effort, and for some minutes sat in silence, with closed eyes.

When they opened them finally it was with a sudden start at the sound of a woman's voice. Their ears had for long hours been inured to a ceaseless din of other noises—an ear-splitting confusion of cannon and musketry roar from the field less than an eighth of a mile away, of yelping shells overhead, and of screams and hoarse shouts all about them. Yet their senses caught this strange note of a woman's voice as if it had fallen upon the hush of midnight.

They looked up, and beheld Miss Julia Parmalee!

Upon such a background of heated squalor, dirt, and murderous disorder, it did not seem surprising to them that this lady should present a picture of cool, fresh neatness. She wore a snow-white nurse's cap, and broad, spotless bands of white linen were crossed over the shoulders of her pale dove-colored dress. Her dark face, dusky pink at the cheeks, glowed with a proud excitement. Her big brown eyes swept along the row of recumbent figures at her feet with the glance of a born conqueror.

"This is not a fit place for him," she said. "It is absurd to bring a gentleman—an officer of the headquarters staff—out to such a place as this!"

Then the two volunteers from Octavius saw

that behind her were four men, bearing a laden stretcher, and that at her side was a regimental hospital steward, who also looked speculatively along the rows of sufferers.

"It's the best thing we can do, anyway," he replied, not over politely; "and for that matter, there's hardly room here."

"Oh, there'd be no trouble about that," retorted Miss Julia, calmly. "We could move any of these people here. The General told me I was always to do just what I thought best. I am sure that if I could see him now he would insist at once that Colonel Starbuck should have a bed to himself, inside the house."

"I'll bet he wouldn't!" said the hospital steward, with emphasis.

"Perhaps you don't realize," put in Miss Julia, coldly, "that Colonel Starbuck is a staff officer—and a friend of mine."

"I don't care if he was on all the staffs there are," said the hospital steward, "he's got to take his chance with the rest. And it don't matter about his being a friend, either; we ain't playing favorites much just now. I don't see no room here, Miss. You'll have to take him out in the open lot there."

"Oh, never!" protested Miss Julia, vehe-

mently. "It's disgraceful! Why, the place is under fire there. I saw them running away from a shell there only a minute ago. No, if we can't do anything better, we'll have one of these men moved."

"Well, do something pretty quick!" growled one of the men supporting the stretcher.

Miss Parmalee had looked two or three times in an absent-minded way at the two men on the ground nearest her—obviously without recognizing either of them. There was a definite purpose in the glance she now bent upon Dwight Ransom—a glance framed in the resourceful smile he remembered so well.

"You seem to be able to sit up, my man," she said, ingratiatingly, to him; "would you be so very kind as to let me have that place for Colonel Starbuck, here—he is on the headquarters staff—and I am sure we should be so much obliged. You will easily get a nice place somewhere else for yourself. Oh, thank you so much! It is so good of you!"

Suppressing a groan at the pain the movement involved, and without a word, Dwight lifted himself slowly to his feet, and stepped aside, waving a hand toward the hay and knapsack in token of their surrender.

Then Miss Julia helped lift from the litter the

object of her anxiety. Colonel Starbuck was of a slender, genteel figure, and had the top of his head swathed heavily in bandages. He wore long, curly, brown side-whiskers, and his chin had been shaved that very morning. This was enough in itself to indicate that he belonged to the headquarters staff, but the fact was proclaimed afresh by everything else about him—his speckless uniform, his spick-and-span gauntlets, his carefully polished boots, the glittering newness of his shoulder-straps, sword scabbard, buttons, and spurs. It was clear that, whatever else had happened, his line of communication with the headquarters baggage train had never been interrupted.

"It is so kind of you!" Miss Parmalee murmured again, when the staff officer had been helped off the stretcher, and in a dazed and languid way had settled himself down into the place vacated for him. "Would you"—she whispered, looking up now, and noting that the hospital steward and the litter-men had gone away—"would you mind stepping over to the house, or to one of the tents beyond—you'll find him somewhere—and asking Dr. Willoughby to come at once? Tell him it is for Colonel Starbuck of the headquarters staff, and you'd better mention my name—Miss

Parmalee, of the Sanitary Commission. You won't forget the name—Parmalee?"

"I don't fancy I shall forget it," said Dwight, gravely. "I've got a better memory than some."

Miss Julia caught the tone of voice on the instant, and looked upward again from where she knelt beside the Colonel, with a swift smile.

"Why, it's Mr. Ransom, I do believe!" she exclaimed. "I should never have known you with your beard. It's so good of you to take this trouble—you always were so obliging! Any one will tell you where Dr. Willoughby is. He's the surgeon of the Eighteenth, you know. I'm sure he'll come at once—to please me—and time is so precious, you know!"

Without further words, Dwight moved off slowly and unsteadily toward the house.

Miss Parmalee, seating herself so that some of her mouse-tinted draperies almost touched the face of Dwight's companion, unhooked a fan from her girdle and began softly fanning Colonel Starbuck. "The doctor won't be long," she said, in low, cooing tones, after a little; "do you feel easier now?"

"I am rather dizzy still, and a little faint," replied the Colonel, languorously. "That

fanning is so delicious though, that I'm really very happy. At least I would be if I weren't nervous about you. You have been through such tremendous exertions all day—out in the sun, amid all these horrid sights and this infernal roar—without a parasol, too. Are you quite sure it has not been too much for you?"

"You are always so thoughtful of others, dear Colonel Starbuck," murmured Miss Julia, reducing the fanning to a gentle, measured movement, and fixing her lustrous eyes pensively upon the clouds above the horizon. "You never think of yourself!"

"Only to think how happy my fate is, to be rescued and nursed by an angel," sighed the Colonel.

A smile of gentle deprecation played upon Miss Julia's red lips, and imparted to her eyes the expression they would wear if they had been gazing upon a tenderly entrancing vision in the sky. Then, all at once; she gave a little start of aroused attention, looked puzzled, and after a moment's pause bent her head over close to the Colonel's.

"The man behind me has taken tight hold of my dress," she whispered, hurriedly. "I don't want to turn around, but can you see him? He isn't having a fit or anything, is he?"

Colonel Starbuck lifted himself a trifle, and looked across. "No," he whispered in return, "he appears to be asleep. Probably he is dreaming. He is a corporal—some infantry regiment. They do manage to get so—what shall I say—so unwashed! Shall I move his hand for you?"

Miss Julia shook her head, with an arch little half smile.

"No, poor man," she murmured. "It gives me almost a sense of the romantic. Perhaps he is dreaming of home—of some one dear to him. Corporals do have their romances, you know, as well as——"

"As well as colonels," the staff officer playfully finished the sentence for her. "Well, I congratulate him, if his is a thousandth part as joyful as mine."

"Oh, then, you have one!" pursued Miss Parmalee, allowing her eyes to sparkle for an instant before they were coyly raised again to the clouds. Darkness was gathering there rapidly.

"Why pretend that you don't understand?" pleaded Colonel Starbuck—and there seemed to be no answer forthcoming. The fan moved even more sedately now, with a tender flutter at the end of each downward sweep.

Presently the preoccupation of the couple—one might not call it silence in such an unbroken uproar as rose around them and smashed through the air above—was interrupted by the appearance of a young, sharp-faced man, who marched straight across the yard toward them and, halting, spoke hurriedly.

"I was asked specially to come here for a moment," he said, "but it can only be a minute. We're just over our heads in work. What is it?"

Miss Parmalee looked at the young man with a favorless eye. He was unshaven, dishevelled, brusque of manner and speech. He was bareheaded, and his unimportant figure was almost hidden beneath a huge, revoltingly stained apron.

"I asked for my friend, Dr. Willoughby," she said. "But if he could not come, I must insist upon immediate attention for Colonel Starbuck here—an officer of the headquarter staff."

While she spoke the young surgeon had thrown himself on one knee, adroitly though roughly lifted the Colonel's bandages, run an inquiring finger over his skull, and plumped the linen back again. He sprang to his feet with an impatient grunt. "Paltry scalp

wound," he snorted. Then, turning on his heel, he almost knocked against Dwight Ransom, who had come slowly up behind him.

"You had no business to drag me off for foolishness of this sort," he said, in vexed tones. "Here are thousands of men waiting their turn who really need help, and I've been working twenty hours a day for a week, and couldn't keep up with the work if every day had two hundred hours. It's ridiculous!"

Dwight shrugged his unhurt shoulder. "I didn't ask you for myself," he replied. "I'm quite willing to wait my turn—but the lady here—she asked me to bring help——"

"It can't be that this gentleman understands," put in Miss Julia, "that his assistance was desired for an officer of the headquarters staff."

"Madame," said the young surgeon, "with your permission, damn the headquarters staff!" and, turning abruptly, he strode off.

"I will go and see the General myself," exclaimed Miss Parmalee, flushing with wrath. "I will see whether he will permit the Sanitary Commission to be affronted in this outrageous——"

She stopped short. Her indignant effort to rise to her feet had been checked by a hand on

firmly the ground, which held in its grasp a fold of her skirt. She turned, pulled the cloth from the clutch of the tightened fingers, looked at the hand as it sprawled limply on the grass, and gave a little, shuddering, half-hysterical laugh. "Mercy me!" was what she said.

"You know who it is, don't you?" asked Dwight Ransom.

The meaning in his voice struck Miss Julia, and she bent a careful scrutiny through the dusk upon the face of the man stretched out beside her. His head had slipped sidewise on the knapsack, and his bearded chin was unnaturally sunk into his collar. Through the grime on his face could be discerned an unearthly pallor. His wide-open eyes seemed staring fixedly, reproachfully, at the hand which had lost its hold upon Miss Julia's dress.

"It does seem as if I'd seen the face before somewhere," she remarked, "but I don't appear to place it. It is getting so dark, too. No, I can't imagine. Who is it?"

She had risen to her feet and was peering down at the dead man, her pretty brows knitted in perplexity.

"He recognized you!" said Dwight, with significant gravity. "It's Marsena Pulford."

"Oh, poor man!" exclaimed Julia. "If

he'd only spoken to me I would gladly have fanned him, too. But I was so anxious about the Colonel here that I never took a fair look at him. I dare say I shouldn't have recognized him, even then. Beards do change one so, don't they!"

Then she turned to Colonel Starbuck and made answer to the inquiry of his lifted eyebrows.

"The unfortunate man," she explained, "was our village photographer. I sat to him for my picture several times. I think I have one of them over at the Commission tent now."

"I'll go this minute and seize it!" the gallant Colonel vowed, getting to his feet.

"Take care! We unprotected females have a man trap there!" Julia warned him; but fear did not deter the staff officer from taking her arm and leaning on it as they walked away in the twilight.

Then the night fell, and Dwight buried Marsena.

The War Widow

THE WAR WIDOW

I.

ALTHOUGH we had been one man short all day, and there was a plain threat of rain in the hot air, everybody left the hay-field long before sundown. It was too much to ask of human nature to stay off up in the remote meadows, when such remarkable things were happening down around the house.

Marcellus Jones and I were in the pasture, watching the dog get the cows together for the homeward march. He did it so well and, withal, so willingly, that there was no call for us to trouble ourselves in keeping up with him. We waited instead at the open bars until the hay-wagon had passed through, rocking so heavily in the ancient pitch-hole, as it did so, that the driver was nearly thrown off his perch on the top of the high load. Then we put up the bars, and fell in close behind the hay-makers. A rich cloud of dust, far ahead on the road, suggested that the dog was doing his work

even too willingly, but for the once we feared no rebuke. Almost anything might be condoned that day.

Five grown-up men walked abreast down the highway, in the shadow of the towering wagon mow, clad much alike in battered straw hats, gray woollen shirts open at the neck, and rough old trousers bulging over the swollen, creased ankles of thick boots. One had a scythe on his arm; two others bore forks over their shoulders. By request, Hi Tuckerman allowed me to carry his sickle.

Although my present visit to the farm had been of only a few days' duration—and those days of strenuous activity darkened by a terrible grief—I had come to be very friendly with Mr. Tuckerman. He took a good deal more notice of me than the others did; and, when chance and leisure afforded, addressed the bulk of his remarks to me. This favoritism, though it fascinated me, was not without its embarrassing side. Hi Tuckerman had taken part in the battle of Gaines's Mill two years before, and had been shot straight through the tongue. One could still see the deep scar on each of his cheeks, a sunken and hairless pit in among his sandy beard. His heroism in the war and his good qualities as a citizen had earned for

him the esteem of his neighbors, and they saw to it that he never wanted for work. But their present respect for him stopped short of the pretence that they enjoyed hearing him talk. Whenever he attempted conversation, people moved away, or began boisterous dialogues with one another to drown him out. Being a sensitive man, he had come to prefer silence to these rebuffs among those he knew. But he still had a try at the occasional polite stranger—and I suppose it was in this capacity that I won his heart. Though I never of my own initiative understood a word he said, Marcellus sometimes interpreted a sentence or so for me, and I listened to all the rest with a fraudulently wise face. To give only a solitary illustration of the tax thus levied on our friendship, I may mention that when Hi Tuckerman said "*Aah !*-ah-*aah !*-uh," he meant "Rappahannock," and he did this rather better than a good many other words.

"Rappahannock," alas! was a word we heard often enough in those days, along with Chickahominy and Rapidan, and that odd Chattahoochee, the sound of which raised always in my boyish mind the notion that the geography-makers must have achieved it in their baby-talk period. These strange South-

ern river names and many more were as familiar to the ears of these four other untravelled Dearborn County farmers as the noise of their own shallow Nedahma rattling over its pebbles in the valley yonder. Only when their slow fancy fitted substance to these names they saw in mind's eye dark, sinister, swampy currents, deep and silent, and discolored with human blood.

Two of these men who strode along behind the wagon were young half-uncles of mine, Myron and Warren Turnbull, stout, thick-shouldered, honest fellows not much out of their teens, who worked hard, said little, and were always lumped together in speech, by their family, the hired help, and the neighbors, as "the boys." They asserted themselves so rarely, and took everything as it came with such docility, that I myself, being in my eleventh year, thought of them as very young indeed. Next them walked a man, hired just for the haying, named Philleo, and then, scuffling along over the uneven humps and hollows on the outer edge of the road, came Si Hummaston, with the empty ginger-beer pail knocking against his knees.

As Tuckerman's "Hi" stood for Hiram, so I assume the other's "Si" meant Silas, or

possibly Cyrus. I dare say no one, not even his mother, had ever called him by his full name. I know that my companion, Marcellus Jones, who wouldn't be thirteen until after Thanksgiving, habitually addressed him as Si, and almost daily I resolved that I would do so myself. He was a man of more than fifty, I should think, tall, lean, and what Marcellus called "bible-backed." He had a short iron-gray beard and long hair. Whenever there was any very hard or steady work going, he generally gave out and went to sit in the shade, holding a hand flat over his heart, and shaking his head dolefully. This kept a good many from hiring him, and even in haying-time, when everybody on two legs is of some use, I fancy he would often have been left out if it hadn't been for my grandparents. They respected him on account of his piety and his moral character, and always had him down when extra work began. He was said to be the only hired man in the township who could not be goaded in some way into swearing. He looked at one slowly, with the mild expression of a heifer calf.

We had come to the crown of the hill, and the wagon started down the steeper incline, with a great groaning of the brake. The men,

by some tacit understanding, halted and overlooked the scene.

The big old stone farm-house—part of which is said to date almost to the Revolutionary times—was just below us, so near, indeed, that Marcellus said he had once skipped a scaling-stone from where we stood to its roof. The dense, big-leafed foliage of a sap-bush, sheltered in the basin which dipped from our feet, pretty well hid this roof now from view. Farther on, heavy patches of a paler, brighter green marked the orchard, and framed one side of a cluster of barns and stables, at the end of which three or four belated cows were loitering by the trough. It was so still that we could hear the clatter of the stanchions as the rest of the herd sought their places inside the milking-barn.

The men, though, had no eyes for all this, but bent their gaze fixedly on the road, down at the bottom. For a long way this thoroughfare was bordered by a row of tall poplars, which, as we were placed, receded from the vision in so straight a line that they seemed one high, fat tree. Beyond these one saw only a line of richer green, where the vine-wrapped rail-fences cleft their way between the ripening fields.

"I'd 'a' took my oath it was them," said

Philleo. "I can spot them grays as fur's I can see 'em. They turned by the school-house there, or I'll eat it, school-ma'am 'n' all. And the buggy was follerin' 'em, too."

"Yes, I thought it was them," said Myron, shading his eyes with his brown hand.

"But they ought to got past the poplars by this time, then," remarked Warren.

"Why, they'll be drivin' as slow as molasses in January," put in Si Hummaston. "When you come to think of it, it *is* pretty nigh the same as a regular funeral. You mark my words, your father'll have walked them grays every step of the road. I s'pose he'll drive himself—he wouldn't trust bringin' Alvy home to nobody else, would he? I know I wouldn't, if the Lord had given *me* such a son; but then he didn't!"

"No, He didn't!" commented the first speaker, in an unnaturally loud tone of voice, to break in upon the chance that Hi Tuckerman was going to try to talk. But Hi only stretched out his arm, pointing the forefinger toward the poplars.

Sure enough, something was in motion down at the base of the shadows on the road. Then it crept forward, out in the sunlight, and separated itself into two vehicles. A farm wagon

came first, drawn by a team of gray horses. Close after it followed a buggy, with its black top raised. Both advanced so slowly that they seemed scarcely to be moving at all.

"Well, I swan!" exclaimed Si Hummaston, after a minute, "it's Dana Pillsbury drivin' the wagon after all! Well—I dunno—yes, I guess that's prob'bly what I'd 'a' done too, if I'd b'n your father. Yes, it does look more correct, his follerin' on behind, like that. I s'pose that's Alvy's widder in the buggy there with him."

"Yes, that's Serena—it looks like her little girl with her," said Myron, gravely.

"I s'pose we might's well be movin' along down," observed his brother, and at that we all started.

We walked more slowly now, matching our gait to the snail-like progress of those coming toward us. As we drew near to the gate, the three hired men instinctively fell behind the brothers, and in that position the group halted on the grass, facing our drive-way where it left the main road. Not a word was uttered by any one. When at last the wagon came up, Myron and Warren took off their hats, and the others followed suit, all holding them poised at the level of their shoulders.

Dana Pillsbury, carrying himself rigidly upright on the box-seat, drove past us with eyes fixed straight ahead, and a face as coldly expressionless as that of a wooden Indian. The wagon was covered all over with rubber blankets, so that whatever it bore was hidden. Only a few paces behind came the buggy, and my grandfather, old Arphaxed Turnbull, went by in his turn with the same averted, far-away gaze, and the same resolutely stolid countenance. He held the restive young carriage horse down to a decorous walk, a single firm hand on the tight reins, without so much as looking at it. The strong yellow light of the declining sun poured full upon his long gray beard, his shaven upper lip, his dark-skinned, lean, domineering face—and made me think of some hard and gloomy old prophet seeing a vision, in the back part of the Old Testament. If that woman beside him, swathed in heavy black raiment, and holding a child up against her arm, was my Aunt Serena, I should never have guessed it.

We put on our hats again, and walked up the drive-way with measured step behind the carriage till it stopped at the side-piazza stoop. The wagon had passed on toward the big new red barn—and crossing its course I

saw my Aunt Em, bareheaded and with her sleeves rolled up, going to the cow-barn with a milking-pail in her hand. She was walking quickly, as if in a great hurry.

"There's your Ma," I whispered to Marcellus, assuming that he would share my surprise at her rushing off like this, instead of waiting to say 'How-d'-do' to Serena. He only nodded knowingly, and said nothing.

No one else said much of anything. Myron and Warren shook hands in stiff solemnity with the veiled and craped sister-in-law, when their father had helped her and her daughter from the buggy, and one of them remarked in a constrained way that the hot spell seemed to keep up right along. The new comers ascended the steps to the open door, and the woman and child went inside. Old Arphaxed turned on the threshold, and seemed to behold us for the first time.

"After you've put out the horse," he said, "I want the most of yeh to come up to the new barn. Si Hummaston and Marcellus can do the milkin'."

"I kind o' rinched my wrist this forenoon," put in Si, with a note of entreaty in his voice. He wanted sorely to be one of the party at the red barn.

"Mebbe milkin' 'll be good for it," said Arphaxed, curtly. "You and Marcellus do what I say, and keep Sidney with you." With this he, too, went into the house.

II.

It wasn't an easy matter for even a member of the family like myself to keep clearly and untangled in his head all the relationships which existed under this patriarchal Turnbull roof.

Old Arphaxed had been married twice. His first wife was the mother of two children, who grew up, and the older of these was my father, Wilbur Turnbull. He never liked farm-life, and left home early, not without some hard feeling, which neither father nor son ever quite forgot. My father made a certain success of it as a business man in Albany until, in the thirties, his health broke down. He died when I was seven and, although he left some property, my mother was forced to supplement this help by herself going to work as forewoman in a large store. She was too busy to have much time for visiting, and I don't think there was any great love lost between her and the people on the farm; but it was a good healthy place for me to be sent to when the summer vacation

came, and withal inexpensive, and so the first of July each year generally found me out at the homestead, where, indeed, nobody pretended to be heatedly fond of me, but where I was still treated well and enjoyed myself. This year it was understood that my mother was coming out to bring me home later on.

The other child of that first marriage was a girl who was spoken of in youth as Emmeline, but whom I knew now as Aunt Em. She was a silent, tough-fibred, hard-working creature, not at all good-looking, but relentlessly neat, and the best cook I ever knew. Even when the house was filled with extra hired men, no one ever thought of getting in any female help, so tireless and so resourceful was Em. She did all the housework there was to do, from cellar to garret, was continually lending a hand in the men's chores, made more butter than the household could eat up, managed a large kitchen-garden, and still had a good deal of spare time, which she spent in sitting out in the piazza in a starched pink calico gown, knitting the while she watched who went up and down the road. When you knew her, you understood how it was that the original Turnbulls had come into that part of the country just after the Revolution, and in a few years chopped down all the

forests, dug up all the stumps, drained the swale-lands, and turned the entire place from a wilderness into a flourishing and fertile home for civilized people. I used to feel, when I looked at her, that she would have been quite equal to doing the whole thing herself.

All at once, when she was something over thirty, Em had up and married a mowing-machine agent named Abel Jones, whom no one knew anything about, and who, indeed, had only been in the neighborhood for a week or so. The family was struck dumb with amazement. The idea of Em's dallying with the notion of matrimony had never crossed anybody's mind. As a girl she had never had any patience with husking-bees or dances or sleigh-ride parties. No young man had ever seen her home from anywhere, or had had the remotest encouragement to hang around the house. She had never been pretty—so my mother told me—and as she got along in years grew dumpy and thick in figure, with a plain, fat face, a rather scowling brow, and an abrupt, ungracious manner. She had no conversational gifts whatever, and, through years of increasing taciturnity and confirmed unsociability, built up in everybody's mind the conviction that, if there could be a man so wild and unsettled in intellect as

to suggest a tender thought to Em, he would get his ears cuffed off his head for his pains.

Judge, then, how like a thunderbolt the episode of the mowing-machine agent fell upon the family. To bewildered astonishment there soon enough succeeded rage. This Jones was a curly headed man, with a crinkly black beard like those of Joseph's brethren in the Bible picture. He had no home and no property, and didn't seem to amount to much even as a salesman of other people's goods. His machine was quite the worst then in the market, and it could not be learned that he had sold a single one in the county. But he had married Em, and it was calmly proposed that he should henceforth regard the farm as his home. After this point had been sullenly conceded, it turned out that Jones was a widower, and had a boy nine or ten years old, named Marcellus, who was in a sort of orphan asylum in Vermont. There were more angry scenes between father and daughter, and a good deal more bad blood, before it was finally agreed that the boy also should come and live on the farm.

All this had happened in 1860 or 1861. Jones had somewhat improved on acquaintance. He knew about lightning-rods, and had been able to fit out all the farm buildings with them

at cost price. He had turned a little money now and again in trades with hop-poles, butter-firkins, shingles, and the like, and he was very ingenious in mending and fixing up odds and ends. He made shelves and painted the woodwork, and put a tar roof on the summer kitchen. Even Martha, the second Mrs. Turnbull, came finally to admit that he was handy about a house.

This Martha became the head of the household while Em was still a little girl. She was a heavy woman, mentally as well as bodily, rather prone to a peevish view of things, and greatly given to pride in herself and her position, but honest, charitable in her way, and not unkindly at heart. On the whole she was a good stepmother, and Em probably got on quite as well with her as she would have done with her own mother—even in the matter of the mowing-machine agent.

To Martha three sons were born. The two younger ones, Myron and Warren, have already been seen. The eldest boy, Alva, was the pride of the family, and, for that matter, of the whole section.

Alva was the first Turnbull to go to college. From his smallest boyhood it had been manifest that he had great things before him, so hand-

some and clever and winning a lad was he. Through each of his schooling years he was the honor man of his class, and he finished in a blaze of glory by taking the Clark Prize, and practically everything else within reach in the way of academic distinctions. He studied law at Octavius, in the office of Judge Schermerhorn, and in a little time was not only that distinguished man's partner, but distinctly the more important figure in the firm. At the age of twenty-five he was sent to the Assembly. The next year they made him District Attorney, and it was quite understood that it rested with him whether he should be sent to Congress later on, or be presented by the Dearborn County bar for the next vacancy on the Supreme Court bench.

At this point in his brilliant career he married Miss Serena Wadsworth, of Wadsworth's Falls. The wedding was one of the most imposing social events the county had known, so it was said, since the visit of Lafayette. The Wadsworths were an older family, even, than the Fairchilds, and infinitely more fastidious and refined. The daughters of the household, indeed, carried their refinement to such a pitch that they lived an almost solitary life, and grew to the parlous verge of old-maidhood

simply because there was nobody good enough to marry them. Alva Turnbull was, however, up to the standard. It could not be said, of course, that his home surroundings quite matched those of his bride; but, on the other hand, she was nearly two years his senior, and this was held to make matters about even.

In a year or so came the War, and nowhere in the North did patriotic excitement run higher than in this old abolition stronghold of upper Dearborn. Public meetings were held, and nearly a whole regiment was raised in Octavius and the surrounding towns alone. Alva Turnbull made the most stirring and important speech at the first big gathering, and sent a thrill through the whole country side by claiming the privilege of heading the list of volunteers. He was made a captain by general acclaim, and went off with his company in time to get chased from the field of Bull Run. When he came home on a furlough in 1863 he was a major, and later on he rose to be lieutenant-colonel. We understood vaguely that he might have climbed vastly higher in promotion but for the fact that he was too moral and conscientious to get on very well with his immediate superior, General Boyce, of Thessaly, who was notoriously a drinking man.

It was glory enough to have him at the farm, on that visit of his, even as a major. His old parents literally abased themselves at his feet, quite tremulous in their awed pride at his greatness. It made it almost too much to have Serena there also, this fair, thin-faced, prim-spoken daughter of the Wadsworths, and actually to call her by her first name. It was haying time, I remember, but the hired men that year did not eat their meals with the family, and there was even a question whether Marcellus and I were socially advanced enough to come to the table, where Serena and her husband were feeding themselves in state with a novel kind of silver implement called a four-tined fork. If Em hadn't put her foot down, out to the kitchen we should both have gone, I fancy. As it was, we sat decorously at the far end of the table, and asked with great politeness to have things passed to us, which by standing up we could have reached as well as not. It was slow, but it made us feel immensely respectable, almost as if we had been born Wadsworths ourselves.

We agreed that Serena was "stuck up," and Marcellus reported Aunt Em as feeling that her bringing along with her a nursemaid to be waited on hand and foot, just to take care of a

baby, was an imposition bordering upon the intolerable. He said that that was the sort of thing the English did until George Washington rose and drove them out. But we both felt that Alva was splendid.

He was a fine creature physically—taller even than old Arphaxed, with huge square shoulders and a mighty frame. I could recall him as without whiskers, but now he had a waving lustrous brown beard, the longest and biggest I ever saw. He didn't pay much attention to us boys, it was true; but he was affable when we came in his way, and he gave Myron and Warren each a dollar bill when they went to Octavius to see the Fourth of July doings. In the evening some of the more important neighbors would drop in, and then Alva would talk about the War, and patriotism, and saving the Union, till it was like listening to Congress itself. He had a rich, big voice which filled the whole room, so that the hired men could hear every word out in the kitchen; but it was even more affecting to see him walking with his father down under the poplars, with his hands making orator's gestures as he spoke, and old Arphaxed looking at him and listening with shining eyes.

Well, then, he and his wife went away to visit her folks, and then we heard he had left to

join his regiment. From time to time he wrote to his father—letters full of high and loyal sentiments, which were printed next week in the Octavius *Transcript*, and the week after in the Thessaly *Banner of Liberty*. Whenever any of us thought about the War—and who thought much of anything else?—it was always with Alva as the predominant figure in every picture.

Sometimes the arrival of a letter for Aunt Em, or a chance remark about a broken chair or a clock hopelessly out of kilter, would recall for the moment the fact that Abel Jones was also at the seat of war. He had enlisted on that very night when Alva headed the roll of honor, and he had marched away in Alva's company. Somehow he got no promotion, but remained in the ranks. Not even the members of the family were shown the letters Aunt Em received, much less the printers of the newspapers. They were indeed poor misspelled scrawls, about which no one displayed any interest or questioned Aunt Em. Even Marcellus rarely spoke of his father, and seemed to share to the full the family's concentration of thought upon Alva.

Thus matters stood when spring began to play at being summer in the year of '64. The birds came and the trees burst forth into green,

the sun grew hotter and the days longer, the strawberries hidden under the big leaves in our yard started into shape, where the blossoms had been, quite in the ordinary, annual way, with us up North. But down where that dread thing they called "The War" was going on, this coming of warm weather meant more awful massacre, more tortured hearts, and desolated homes, than ever before. I can't be at all sure how much later reading and associations have helped out and patched up what seem to be my boyish recollections of this period; but it is, at all events, much clearer in my mind than are the occurrences of the week before last.

We heard a good deal about how deep the mud was in Virginia that spring. All the photographs and tin-types of officers which found their way to relatives at home, now, showed them in boots that came up to their thighs. Everybody understood that as soon as this mud dried up a little, there were to be most terrific doings. The two great lines of armies lay scowling at each other, still on that blood-soaked fighting ground between Washington and Richmond where they were three years before. Only now things were to go differently. A new general was at the head of affairs, and he was going in, with jaws set and

nerves of steel, to smash, kill, burn, annihilate, sparing nothing, looking not to right or left, till the red road had been hewed through to Richmond. In the first week of May this thing began—a push forward all along the line—and the North, with scared eyes and fluttering heart, held its breath.

My chief personal recollection of those historic forty days is that one morning I was awakened early by a noise in my bedroom, and saw my mother looking over the contents of the big chest of drawers which stood against the wall. She was getting out some black articles of apparel. When she discovered that I was awake, she told me in a low voice that my Uncle Alva had been killed. Then a few weeks later my school closed, and I was packed off to the farm for the vacation. It will be better to tell what had happened as I learned it there from Marcellus and the others.

Along about the middle of May, the weekly paper came up from Octavius, and old Arphaxed Turnbull, as was his wont, read it over out on the piazza before supper. Presently he called his wife to him, and showed her something in it. Martha went out into the kitchen, where Aunt Em was getting the meal ready, and told her, as gently as she could, that there was very

bad news for her; in fact, her husband, Abel Jones, had been killed in the first day's battle in the Wilderness, something like a week before. Aunt Em said she didn't believe it, and Martha brought in the paper and pointed out the fatal line to her. It was not quite clear whether this convinced Aunt Em or not. She finished getting supper, and sat silently through the meal, afterwards, but she went upstairs to her room before family prayers. The next day she was about as usual, doing the work and saying nothing. Marcellus told me that to the best of his belief no one had said anything to her on the subject. The old people were a shade more ceremonious in their manner toward her, and "the boys" and the hired men were on the lookout to bring in water for her from the well, and to spare her as much as possible in the routine of chores, but no one talked about Jones. Aunt Em did not put on mourning. She made a black necktie for Marcellus to wear to church, but stayed away from meeting herself.

A little more than a fortnight afterwards, Myron was walking down the road from the meadows one afternoon, when he saw a man on horseback coming up from the poplars, galloping like mad in a cloud of dust. The two

met at the gate. The man was one of the hired helps of the Wadsworths, and he had ridden as hard as he could pelt from the Falls, fifteen miles away, with a message, which now he gave Myron to read. Both man and beast dripped sweat, and trembled with fatigued excitement. The youngster eyed them, and then gazed meditatively at the sealed envelope in his hand.

"I s'pose you know what's inside?" he asked, looking up at last.

The man in the saddle nodded, with a tell-tale look on his face, and breathing heavily.

Myron handed the letter back, and pushed the gate open. "You'd better go up and give it to father yourself," he said. "I ain't got the heart to face him—jest now, at any rate."

Marcellus was fishing that afternoon, over in the creek which ran through the woods. Just as at last he was making up his mind that it must be about time to go after the cows, he saw Myron sitting on a log beside the forest path, whittling mechanically, and staring at the foliage before him, in an obvious brown study. Marcellus went up to him, and had to speak twice before Myron turned his head and looked up.

"Oh! it's you, eh, Bubb?" he remarked

dreamily, and began gazing once more into the thicket.

"What's the matter?" asked the puzzled boy.

"I guess Alvy's dead," replied Myron. To the lad's comments and questions he made small answer. "No," he said at last, "I don't feel much like goin' home jest now. Lea' me alone here; I'll prob'ly turn up later on." And Marcellus went alone to the pasture, and thence, at the tail of his bovine procession, home.

When he arrived he regretted not having remained with Myron in the woods. It was like coming into something which was prison, hospital, and tomb in one. The household was paralyzed with horror and fright. Martha had gone to bed, or rather had been put there by Em, and all through the night, when he woke up, he heard her broken and hysterical voice in moans and screams. The men had hitched up the grays, and Arphaxed Turnbull was getting into the buggy to drive to Octavius for news when the boy came up. He looked twenty years older than he had at noon—all at once turned into a chalk-faced, trembling, infirm old man—and could hardly see to put his foot on the carriage-step. His son Warren had offered to go with him, and had been rebuffed almost

with fierceness. Warren and the others silently bowed their heads before this mood; instinct told them that nothing but Arphaxed's show of temper held him from collapse—from falling at their feet and grovelling on the grass with cries and sobs of anguish, perhaps even dying in a fit. After he had driven off they forbore to talk to one another, but went about noiselessly with drooping chins and knotted brows.

"It jest took the tuck out of everything," said Marcellus, relating these tragic events to me. There was not much else to tell. Martha had had what they call brain fever, and had emerged from this some weeks afterward a pallid and dim-eyed ghost of her former self, sitting for hours together in her rocking-chair in the unused parlor, her hands idly in her lap, her poor thoughts glued ceaselessly to that vague, far-off Virginia which folks told about as hot and sunny, but which her mind's eye saw under the gloom of an endless and dreadful night. Arphaxed had gone South, still defiantly alone, to bring back the body of his boy. An acquaintance wrote to them of his being down sick in Washington, prostrated by the heat and strange water; but even from his sick-bed he had sent on orders to an undertaking firm out at the front, along with a hundred dollars, their price

in advance for embalming. Then, recovering, he had himself pushed down to headquarters, or as near them as civilians might approach, only to learn that he had passed the precious freight on the way. He posted back again, besieging the railroad officials at every point with inquiries, scolding, arguing, beseeching in turn, until at last he overtook his quest at Juno Mills Junction, only a score of miles from home.

Then only he wrote, telling people his plans. He came first to Octavius, where a funeral service was held in the forenoon, with military honors, the Wadsworths as the principal mourners, and a memorable turnout of distinguished citizens. The town-hall was draped with mourning, and so was Alva's pew in the Episcopal Church, which he had deserted his ancestral Methodism to join after his marriage. Old Arphaxed listened to the novel burial service of his son's communion, and watched the clergyman in his curious white and black vestments, with sombre pride. He himself needed and desired only a plain and homely religion, but it was fitting that his boy should have organ music and flowers and a ritual.

Dana Pillsbury had arrived in town early in the morning with the grays, and a neighbor's boy had brought in the buggy. Immediately

after dinner Arphaxed had gathered up Alva's widow and little daughter, and started the funeral cortège upon its final homeward stage.

And so I saw them arrive on that July afternoon.

III.

For so good and patient a man, Si Hummaston bore himself rather vehemently during the milking. It was hotter in the barn than it was outside in the sun, and the stifling air swarmed with flies, which seemed to follow Si perversely from stall to stall and settle on his cow. One beast put her hoof square in his pail, and another refused altogether to "give down," while the rest kept up a tireless slapping and swishing of their tails very hard to bear, even if one had the help of profanity. Marcellus and I listened carefully to hear him at last provoked to an oath, but the worst thing he uttered, even when the cow stepped in the milk, was "Dum your buttons!" which Marcellus said might conceivably be investigated by a church committee, but was hardly out-and-out swearing.

I remember Si's groans and objurgations, his querulous "Hyst there, will ye!" his hypocritical "So-boss! So-boss!" his despondent "They never will give down for me!" because presently there was crossed upon this

woof of peevish impatience the web of a curious conversation.

Si had been so slow in his headway against flapping tails and restive hoofs that, before he had got up to the end of the row, Aunt Em had finished her side. She brought over her stool and pail, and seated herself at the next cow to Hummaston's. For a little, one heard only the resonant din of the stout streams against the tin; then, as the bottom was covered, there came the ploughing plash of milk on milk, and Si could hear himself talk.

"S'pose you know S'reny's come, 'long with your father," he remarked, ingratiatingly.

"I saw 'em drive in," replied Em.

"*Whoa! Hyst there! Hole still, can't ye?* I didn't know if you quite made out who she was, you was scootin' 'long so fast. They ain't—*Whoa there!*—they ain't nothin' the matter 'twixt you and her, is they?"

"I don't know as there is," said Em, curtly. "The world's big enough for both of us—we ain't no call to bunk into each other."

"No, of course—*Now you stop it!*—but it looked kind o' curious to me, your pikin' off like that, without waitin' to say 'How-d'-do?' Of course, I never had no relation by marriage that was stuck-up at all, or looked down on me

—*Stiddy there now!*—but I guess I can reelize pretty much how you feel about it. I'm a good deal of a hand at that. It's what they call imagination. It's a gift, you know, like good looks, or preachin', or the knack o' makin' money. But you can't help what you're born with, can you? I'd been a heap better off if my gift 'd be'n in some other direction; but, as I tell 'em, it ain't my fault. And my imagination—*Hi, there! git over, will ye?*—it's downright cur'ous sometimes, how it works. Now I could tell, you see, that you 'n S'reny didn't pull together. I s'pose she never writ a line to you, when your husband was killed?"

"Why should she?" demanded Em. "We never did correspond. What'd be the sense of beginning then? She minds her affairs, 'n I mind mine. Who wanted her to write?"

"Oh, of course not," said Si, lightly. "Prob'ly you'll get along better together, though, now that you'll see more of one another. I s'pose S'reny's figurin' on stayin' here right along now, her 'n' her little girl. Well, it'll be nice for the old folks to have somebody they're fond of. They jest worshipped the ground Alvy walked on—and I s'pose they won't be anything in this wide world too good for that

little girl of his. Le's see, she must be comin' on three now, ain't she?"

"I don't know anything about her!" snapped Aunt Em, with emphasis.

"Of course, it's natural the old folks should feel so—she bein' Alvy's child. I hain't noticed anything special, but does it—*Well, I swan! Hyst there!*—does it seem to you that they're as good to Marcellus, quite, as they used to be? I don't hear 'em sayin' nothin' about his goin' to school next winter."

Aunt Em said nothing, too, but milked doggedly on. Si told her about the thickness and profusion of Serena's mourning, guardedly hinted at the injustice done him by not allowing him to go to the red barn with the others, speculated on the likelihood of the Wadsworths' contributing to their daughter's support, and generally exhibited his interest in the family through a monologue which finished only with the milking; but Aunt Em made no response whatever.

When the last pails had been emptied into the big cans at the door—Marcellus and I had let the cows out one by one into the yard, as their individual share in the milking ended—Si and Em saw old Arphaxed wending his way across from the house to the red barn. He ap-

peared more bent than ever, but he walked with a slowness which seemed born of reluctance even more than of infirmity.

"Well, now," mused Si, aloud, "Brother Turnbull an' me's be'n friends for a good long spell. I don't believe he'd be mad if I cut over now to the red barn too, seein' the milkin's all out of the way. Of course I don't want to do what ain't right—what d'you think now, Em, honest? Think it 'ud rile him?"

"I don't know anything about it!" my aunt replied, with increased vigor of emphasis. "But for the land sake go somewhere! Don't hang around botherin' me. I got enough else to think of besides your everlasting cackle."

Thus rebuffed, Si meandered sadly into the cow-yard, shaking his head as he came. Seeing us seated on an upturned plough, over by the fence, from which point we had a perfect view of the red barn, he sauntered toward us, and, halting at our side, looked to see if there was room enough for him to sit also. But Marcellus, in quite a casual way, remarked, "Oh! wheeled the milk over to the house, already, Si?" and at this the doleful man lounged off again in new despondency, got out the wheelbarrow, and, with ostentatious groans of travail hoisted a can upon it and started off.

"He's takin' advantage of Arphaxed's being so worked up to play 'ole soldier' on him," said Marcellus. "All of us have to stir him up the whole time to keep him from takin' root somewhere. I told him this afternoon 't' if there had to be any settin' around under the bushes an' cryin', the fam'ly 'ud do it."

We talked in hushed tones as we sat there watching the shut doors of the red barn, in boyish conjecture about what was going on behind them. I recall much of this talk with curious distinctness, but candidly it jars now upon my maturer nerves. The individual man looks back upon his boyhood with much the same amused amazement that the race feels in contemplating the memorials of its own cave-dwelling or bronze period. What strange savages we were! In those days Marcellus and I used to find our very highest delight in getting off on Thursdays, and going over to Dave Bushnell's slaughter-house, to witness with stony hearts, and from as close a coign of vantage as might be, the slaying of some score of barnyard animals—the very thought of which now revolts our grown-up minds. In the same way we sat there on the plough, and criticised old Arphaxed's meanness in excluding us from the red barn, where the men-folks were coming in final

contact with the "pride of the family." Some of the cows wandering toward us began to "moo" with impatience for the pasture, but Marcellus said there was no hurry.

All at once we discovered that Aunt Em was standing a few yards away from us, on the other side of the fence. We could see her from where we sat by only turning a little—a motionless, stout, upright figure, with a pail in her hand, and a sternly impassive look on her face. She, too, had her gaze fixed upon the red barn, and, though the declining sun was full in her eyes, seemed incapable of blinking, but just stared coldly, straight ahead.

Suddenly an unaccustomed voice fell upon our ears. Turning, we saw that a black-robed woman, with a black wrap of some sort about her head, had come up to where Aunt Em stood, and was at her shoulder. Marcellus nudged me, and whispered, "It's S'reny. Look out for squalls!" And then we listened in silence.

"Won't you speak to me at all, Emmeline?" we heard this new voice say.

Aunt Em's face, sharply outlined in profile against the sky, never moved. Her lips were pressed into a single line, and she kept her eyes on the barn.

"If there's anything I've done, tell me," pursued the other. "In such an hour as this—when both our hearts are bleeding so, and—and every breath we draw is like a curse upon us—it doesn't seem a fit time for us—for us to——" The voice faltered and broke, leaving the speech unfinished.

Aunt Em kept silence so long that we fancied this appeal, too, had failed. Then abruptly, and without moving her head, she dropped a few ungracious words as it were over her shoulder, "If I had anything special to say, most likely I'd say it," she remarked.

We could hear the sigh that Serena drew. She lifted her shawled head, and for a moment seemed as if about to turn. Then she changed her mind, apparently, for she took a step nearer to the other.

"See here, Emmeline," she said, in a more confident tone. "Nobody in the world knows better than I do how thoroughly good a woman you are, how you have done your duty, and more than your duty, by your parents and your brothers, and your little step-son. You have never spared yourself for them, day or night. I have said often to—to him who has gone—that I didn't believe there was anywhere on earth a worthier or more devoted woman than you, his

sister. And—now that he is gone—and we are both more sisters than ever in affliction—why in Heaven's name should you behave like this to me?"

Aunt Em spoke more readily this time. "I don't know as I've done anything to you," she said in defence. "I've just let you alone, that's all. An' that's doin' as I'd like to be done by." Still she did not turn her head, or lift her steady gaze from those closed doors.

"Don't let us split words!" entreated the other, venturing a thin, white hand upon Aunt Em's shoulder. "That isn't the way we two ought to stand to each other. Why, you were friendly enough when I was here before. Can't it be the same again? What has happened to change it? Only to-day, on our way up here, I was speaking to your father about you, and my deep sympathy for you, and——"

Aunt Em wheeled like a flash. "Yes, 'n' what did *he* say? Come, don't make up anything! Out with it! What did he say?" She shook off the hand on her shoulder as she spoke.

Gesture and voice and frowning vigor of mien were all so imperative and rough that they seemed to bewilder Serena. She, too, had turned now, so that I could see her wan and delicate face, framed in the laced festoons of

black, like the fabulous countenance of "The Lady Iñez" in my mother's "Album of Beauty." She bent her brows in hurried thought, and began stammering, "Well, he said—Let's see—he said——"

"Oh, yes!" broke in Aunt Em, with raucous irony, "I know well enough what he said! He said I was a good worker—that they'd never had to have a hired girl since I was big enough to wag a churn dash, an' they wouldn't known what to do without me. I know all that; I've heard it on an' off for twenty years. What I'd like to hear is, did he tell you that he went down South to bring back *your* husband, an' that he never so much as give a thought to fetchin' *my* husband, who was just as good a soldier and died just as bravely as yours did? I'd like to know—did he tell you that?"

What could Serena do but shake her head, and bow it in silence before this bitter gale of words?

"An' tell me this, too," Aunt Em went on, lifting her harsh voice mercilessly, "when you was settin' there in church this forenoon, with the soldiers out, an' the bells tollin' an' all that—did he say 'This is some for Alvy, an' some for Abel, who went to the war together,

an' was killed together, or within a month o' one another?' Did he say that, or look for one solitary minute as if he thought it? I'll bet he didn't!"

Serena's head sank lower still, and she put up, in a blinded sort of a way, a little white handkerchief to her eyes. "But why blame *me?*" she asked.

Aunt Em heard her own voice so seldom that the sound of it now seemed to intoxicate her. "No!" she shouted. "It's like the Bible. One was taken an' the other left. It was always Alvy this, an' Alvy that, nothin' for any one but Alvy. That was all right; nobody complained: prob'ly he deserved it all; at any rate, we didn't begrudge him any of it, while he was livin'. But there ought to be a limit somewhere. When a man's dead, he's pretty much about on an equality with other dead men, one would think. But it ain't so. One man gets hunted after when he's shot, an' there's a hundred dollars for embalmin' him an' a journey after him, an' bringin' him home, an' two big funerals, an' crape for his widow that'd stand by itself. The *other* man—he can lay where he fell! Them that's lookin' for the first one are right close by—it ain't more'n a few miles from the Wilderness to Cold Harbor,

so Hi Tuckerman tells me, an' he was all over the ground two years ago—but nobody looks for this other man ! Oh, no ! Nobody so much as remembers to think of him ! They ain't no hundred dollars, no, not so much as fifty cents, for embalmin' *him!* No—*he* could be shovelled in anywhere, or maybe burned up when the woods got on fire that night, the night of the sixth. They ain't no funeral for him—no bells tolled—unless it may be a cowbell up in the pasture that he hammered out himself. An' *his* widow can go around, week days an' Sundays, in her old calico dresses. Nobody ever mentions the word 'mournin' crape' to her, or asks her if she'd like to put on black. I 'spose they thought if they gave me the money for some mournin' I'd buy *candy* with it instead ! ''

With this climax of flaming sarcasm Aunt Em stopped, her eyes aglow, her thick breast heaving in a flurry of breathlessness. She had never talked so much or so fast before in her life. She swung the empty tin-pail now defiantly at her side to hide the fact that her arms were shaking with excitement. Every instant it looked as if she was going to begin again.

Serena had taken the handkerchief down from her eyes and held her arms stiff and straight by

her side. Her chin seemed to have grown longer or to be thrust forward more. When she spoke, it was in a colder voice—almost mincing in the way it cut off the words.

"All this is not my doing," she said. "I am to blame for nothing of it. As I tried to tell you, I sympathize deeply with your grief. But grief ought to make people at least fair, even if it cannot make them gentle and soften their hearts. I shall trouble you with no more offers of friendship. I—I think I will go back to the house now—to my little girl."

Even as she spoke, there came from the direction of the red barn a shrill, creaking noise which we all knew. At the sound Marcellus and I stood up, and Serena forgot her intention to go away. The barn doors, yelping as they moved on their dry rollers, had been pushed wide open.

IV.

THE first one to emerge from the barn was Hi Tuckerman. He started to make for the house, but, when he caught sight of our group, came running toward us at the top of his speed, uttering incoherent shouts as he advanced, and waving his arms excitedly. It was apparent that something out of the ordinary had happened.

We were but little the wiser as to this something, when Hi had come to a halt before us, and was pouring out a volley of explanations, accompanied by earnest grimaces and strenuous gestures. Even Marcellus could make next to nothing of what he was trying to convey; but Aunt Em, strangely enough, seemed to understand him. Still slightly trembling, and with a little occasional catch in her breath, she bent an intent scrutiny upon Hi, and nodded comprehendingly from time to time, with encouraging exclamations, "He did, eh!" "Is that so?" and "I expected as much." Listening and watching, I formed the uncharitable conviction that she did not really understand Hi at

all, but was only pretending to do so in order further to harrow Serena's feelings.

Doubtless I was wrong, for presently she turned, with an effort, to her sister-in-law, and remarked, "P'rhaps you don't quite follow what he's sayin'?"

"Not a word!" said Serena, eagerly. "Tell me, please, Emmeline!"

Aunt Em seemed to hesitate. "He was shot through the mouth at Gaines's Mills, you know — that's right near Cold Harbor and — the Wilderness," she said, obviously making talk.

"That isn't what he's saying," broke in Serena. "What *is* it, Emmeline?"

"Well," rejoined the other, after an instant's pause, "if you want to know—he says that it ain't Alvy at all that they've got there in the barn."

Serena turned swiftly, so that we could not see her face.

"He says it's some strange man," continued Em, "a yaller-headed man, all packed an' stuffed with charcoal, so't his own mother wouldn't know him. Who it is nobody knows, but it ain't Alvy."

"They're a pack of robbers 'n' swindlers!" cried old Arphaxed, shaking his long gray beard with wrath.

He had come up without our noticing his approach, so rapt had been our absorption in the strange discovery reported by Hi Tuckerman. Behind him straggled the boys and the hired men, whom Si Hummaston had scurried across from the house to join. No one said anything now, but tacitly deferred to the old man's principal right to speak. It was a relief to hear that terrible silence of his broken at all.

"They ought to all be hung!" he cried, in a voice to which the excess of passion over physical strength gave a melancholy quaver. "I paid 'em what they asked—they took a hundred dollars o' my money—an' they ain't sent me *him* at all! There I went, at my age, all through the Wilderness, almost clear to Cold Harbor, an' that, too, gittin up from a sick bed in Washington, and then huntin' for the box at New York an' Albany, an' all the way back, an' holdin' a funeral over it only this very day —an' here it ain't *him* at all! I'll have the law on 'em though, if it costs the last cent I've got in the world!"

Poor old man! These weeks of crushing grief and strain had fairly broken him down. We listened to his fierce outpourings with sympathetic silence, almost thankful that he had left

strength and vitality enough still to get angry and shout. He had been always a hard and gusty man; we felt by instinct, I suppose, that his best chance of weathering this terrible month of calamity was to batter his way furiously through it, in a rage with everything and everybody.

"If there's any justice in the land," put in Si Hummaston, "you'd ought to get your hundred dollars back. I shouldn't wonder if you could, too, if you sued 'em afore a Jestice that was a friend of yours."

"Why, the man's a fool!" burst forth Arphaxed, turning toward him with a snort. "I don't want the hundred dollars—I wouldn't 'a' begrudged a thousand—if only they'd dealt honestly by me. I paid 'em their own figure, without beatin' 'em down a penny. If it 'd be'n double, I'd 'a' paid it. What *I* wanted was *my boy!* It ain't so much their cheatin' *me* I mind, either, if it 'd be'n about anything else. But to think of Alvy—*my boy*—after all the trouble I took, an' the journey, an' my sickness there among strangers—to think that after it all he's buried down there, no one knows where, p'raps in some trench with private soldiers, shovelled in anyhow—oh-h! they ought to be hung!"

The two women had stood motionless, with their gaze on the grass; Aunt Em lifted her head at this.

"If a place is good enough for private soldiers to be buried in," she said, vehemently, "it's good enough for the best man in the army. On Resurrection Day, do you think them with shoulder-straps 'll be called fust an' given all the front places? I reckon the men that carried a musket are every whit as good, there in the trench, as them that wore swords. They gave their lives as much as the others did, an' the best man that ever stepped couldn't do no more."

Old Arphaxed bent upon her a long look, which had in it much surprise and some elements of menace. Reflection seemed, however, to make him think better of an attack on Aunt Em. He went on, instead, with rambling exclamations to his auditors at large.

"Makin' me the butt of the whole county!" he cried. "There was that funeral to-day—with a parade an' a choir of music an' so on: an' now it 'll come out in the papers that it wasn't Alvy at all I brought back with me, but only some perfect stranger—by what you can make out from his clothes, not even an officer at all. I tell you the War's a jedgment on this

country for its wickedness, for its cheatin' an' robbin' of honest men! They wa'n't no sense in that battle at Cold Harbor anyway—everybody admits that! It was murder an' massacre in cold blood—fifty thousand men mowed down, an' nothin' gained by it! An' then not even to git my boy's dead body back! I say hangin's too good for 'em!"

"Yes, father," said Myron, soothingly; "but do you stick to what you said about the —the box? Wouldn't it look better——"

"*No!*" shouted Arphaxed, with emphasis. "Let Dana do what I told him—take it down this very night to the poor master, an' let him bury it where he likes. It's no affair of mine. I wash my hands of it. There won't be no funeral held here!"

It was then that Serena spoke. Strangely enough, old Arphaxed had not seemed to notice her presence in our group, and his jaw visibly dropped as he beheld her now standing before him. He made a gesture signifying his disturbance at finding her among his hearers, and would have spoken, but she held up her hand.

"Yes, I heard it all," she said, in answer to his deprecatory movement. "I am glad I did. It has given me time to get over the shock of

learning—our mistake—and it gives me the chance now to say something which I—I feel keenly. The poor man you have brought home was, you say, a private soldier. Well, isn't this a good time to remember that there was a private soldier who went out from this farm—belonging right to this family—and who, as a private, laid down his life as nobly as General Sedgwick or General Wadsworth, or even our dear Alva, or any one else? I never met Emmeline's husband, but Alva liked him, and spoke to me often of him. Men who fall in the ranks don't get identified, or brought home, but they deserve funerals as much as the others—just as much. Now, this is my idea: let us feel that the mistake which has brought this poor stranger to us is God's way of giving us a chance to remember and do honor to Abel Jones. Let him be buried in the family lot up yonder, where we had thought to lay Alva, and let us do it reverently, in the name of Emmeline's husband, and of all others who have fought and died for our country, and with sympathy in our hearts for the women who, somewhere in the North, are mourning, just as we mourn here, for the stranger there in the red barn."

Arphaxed had watched her intently. He

nodded now, and blinked at the moisture gathering in his old eyes. "I could e'en a'most 'a' thought it was Alvy talkin'." was what he said. Then he turned abruptly, but we all knew, without further words, that what Serena had suggested was to be done.

The men-folk, wondering doubtless much among themselves, moved slowly off toward the house or the cow-barns, leaving the two women alone. A minute of silence passed before we saw Serena creep gently up to Aunt Em's side, and lay the thin white hand again upon her shoulder. This time it was not shaken off, but stretched itself forward, little by little, until its palm rested against Aunt Em's further cheek. We heard the tin-pail fall resonantly against the stones under the rail-fence, and there was a confused movement as if the two women were somehow melting into one.

"Come on, Sid!" said Marcellus Jones to me; "let's start them cows along. If there's anything I hate to see it's women cryin' on each other's necks."

The Eve of the Fourth

THE EVE OF THE FOURTH

IT was well on toward evening before this Third of July all at once made itself gloriously different from other days in my mind.

There was a very long afternoon, I remember, hot and overcast, with continual threats of rain, which never came to anything. The other boys were too excited about the morrow to care for present play. They sat instead along the edge of the broad platform-stoop in front of Delos Ingersoll's grocery-store, their brown feet swinging at varying heights above the sidewalk, and bragged about the manner in which they contemplated celebrating the anniversary of their Independence. Most of the elder lads were very independent indeed; they were already secure in the parental permission to stay up all night, so that the Fourth might be ushered in with its full quota of ceremonial. The smaller urchins pretended that they also had this permission, or were sure of getting it. Little Denny Cregan attracted admiring attention by vowing that he should remain out, even

if his father chased him with a policeman all around the ward, and he had to go and live in a cave in the gulf until he was grown up.

My inferiority to these companions of mine depressed me. They were allowed to go without shoes and stockings; they wore loose and comfortable old clothes, and were under no responsibility to keep them dry or clean or whole; they had their pockets literally bulging now with all sorts of portentous engines of noise and racket—huge brown "double-enders," bound with waxed cord; long, slim, vicious-looking "nigger-chasers;" big "Union torpedoes," covered with clay, which made a report like a horse-pistol, and were invaluable for frightening farmers' horses; and so on through an extended catalogue of recondite and sinister explosives upon which I looked with awe, as their owners from time to time exhibited them with the proud simplicity of those accustomed to greatness. Several of these boys also possessed toy cannons, which would be brought forth at twilight. They spoke firmly of ramming them to the muzzle with grass, to produce a greater noise—even if it burst them and killed everybody.

By comparison, my lot was one of abasement. I was a solitary child, and a victim to conven-

tions. A blue necktie was daily pinned under my Byron collar, and there were gilt buttons on my zouave jacket. When we were away in the pasture playground near the gulf, and I ventured to take off my foot-gear, every dry old thistle-point in the whole territory seemed to arrange itself to be stepped upon by my whitened and tender soles. I could not swim; so, while my lithe bold comrades dived out of sight under the deep water, and darted about chasing one another far beyond their depth, I paddled ignobly around the "baby-hole" close to the bank, in the warm and muddy shallows.

Especially apparent was my state of humiliation on this July afternoon. I had no "double-enders," nor might hope for any. The mere thought of a private cannon seemed monstrous and unnatural to me. By some unknown process of reasoning my mother had years before reached the theory that a good boy ought to have two ten-cent packs of small fire-crackers on the Fourth of July. Four or five succeeding anniversaries had hardened this theory into an orthodox tenet of faith, with all its observances rigidly fixed. The fire-crackers were bought for me overnight, and placed on the hall table. Beside them lay a long rod of

punk. When I hastened down and out in the morning, with these ceremonial implements in my hands, the hired girl would give me, in an old kettle, some embers from the wood-fire in the summer kitchen. Thus furnished, I went into the front yard, and in solemn solitude fired off these crackers one by one. Those which, by reason of having lost their tails, were only fit for "fizzes," I saved till after breakfast. With the exhaustion of these, I fell reluctantly back upon the public for entertainment. I could see the soldiers, hear the band and the oration, and in the evening, if it didn't rain, enjoy the fireworks; but my own contribution to the patriotic noise was always over before the breakfast dishes had been washed.

My mother scorned the little paper torpedoes as flippant and wasteful things. You merely threw one of them, and it went off, she said, and there you were. I don't know that I ever grasped this objection in its entirety, but it impressed my whole childhood with its unanswerableness. Years and years afterward, when my own children asked for torpedoes, I found myself unconsciously advising against them on quite the maternal lines. Nor was it easy to budge the good lady from her position on the great two-packs issue. I seem to recall having

successfully undermined it once or twice, but two was the rule. When I called her attention to the fact that our neighbor, Tom Hemingway, thought nothing of exploding a whole pack at a time inside their wash-boiler, she was not dazzled, but only replied: "Wilful waste makes woful want."

Of course the idea of the Hemingways ever knowing what want meant was absurd. They lived a dozen doors or so from us, in a big white house with stately white columns rising from veranda to gable across the whole front, and a large garden, flowers and shrubs in front, fruit-trees and vegetables behind. Squire Hemingway was the most important man in our part of the town. I know now that he was never anything more than United States Commissioner of Deeds, but in those days, when he walked down the street with his gold-headed cane, his blanket-shawl folded over his arm, and his severe, dignified, close-shaven face held well up in the air, I seemed to behold a companion of Presidents.

This great man had two sons. The elder of them, De Witt Hemingway, was a man grown, and was at the front. I had seen him march away, over a year before, with a bright drawn sword, at the side of his com-

pany. The other son, Tom, was my senior by only a twelvemonth. He was by nature proud, but often consented to consort with me when the selection of other available associates was at low ebb.

It was to this Tom that I listened with most envious eagerness, in front of the grocery-store, on the afternoon of which I speak. He did not sit on the stoop with the others—no one expected quite that degree of condescension—but leaned nonchalantly against a post, whittling out a new ramrod for his cannon. He said that this year he was not going to have any ordinary fire-crackers at all; they, he added with a meaning glance at me, were only fit for girls. He might do a little in "double-enders," but his real point would be in "ringers"—an incredible giant variety of cracker, Turkey-red like the other, but in size almost a rolling-pin. Some of these he would fire off singly, between volleys from his cannon. But a good many he intended to explode, in bunches say of six, inside the tin wash-boiler, brought out into the middle of the road for that purpose. It would doubtless blow the old thing sky-high, but that didn't matter. They could get a new one.

Even as he spoke, the big bell in the tower

of the town-hall burst forth in a loud clangor of swift-repeated strokes. It was half a mile away, but the moist air brought the urgent, clamorous sounds to our ears as if the belfry had stood close above us. We sprang off the stoop and stood poised, waiting to hear the number of the ward struck, and ready to scamper off on the instant if the fire was anywhere in our part of the town. But the excited peal went on and on, without a pause. It became obvious that this meant something besides a fire. Perhaps some of us wondered vaguely what that something might be, but as a body our interest had lapsed. Billy Norris, who was the son of poor parents, but could whip even Tom Hemingway, said he had been told that the German boys on the other side of the gulf were coming over to "rush" us on the following day, and that we ought all to collect nails to fire at them from our cannon. This we pledged ourselves to do—the bell keeping up its throbbing tumult ceaselessly.

Suddenly we saw the familiar figure of Johnson running up the street toward us. What his first name was I never knew. To every one, little or big, he was just Johnson. He and his family had moved into our town after the War began; I fancy they moved away again before

it ended. I do not even know what he did for a living. But he seemed always drunk, always turbulently good-natured, and always shouting out the news at the top of his lungs. I cannot pretend to guess how he found out everything as he did, or why, having found it out, he straightway rushed homeward, scattering the intelligence as he ran. Most probably Johnson was moulded by Nature for a town-crier, but was born by accident some generations after the race of bellmen had disappeared. Our neighborhood did not like him; our mothers did not know Mrs. Johnson, and we boys behaved with snobbish roughness to his children. He seemed not to mind this at all, but came up unwearyingly to shout out the tidings of the day for our benefit.

"Vicksburg's fell! Vicksburg's fell!" was what we heard him yelling as he approached.

Delos Ingersoll and his hired boy ran out of the grocery. Doors opened along the street and heads were thrust inquiringly out.

"Vicksburg's fell!" he kept hoarsely proclaiming, his arms waving in the air, as he staggered along at a dog-trot past us, and went into the saloon next to the grocery.

I cannot say how definite an idea these tidings conveyed to our boyish minds. I have a

notion that at the time I assumed that Vicksburg had something to do with Gettysburg, where I knew, from the talk of my elders, that an awful fight had been proceeding since the middle of the week. Doubtless this confusion was aided by the fact that an hour or so later, on that same wonderful day, the wire brought us word that this terrible battle on Pennsylvanian soil had at last taken the form of a Union victory. It is difficult now to see how we could have known both these things on the Third of July—that is to say, before the people actually concerned seemed to have been sure of them. Perhaps it was only inspired guesswork, but I know that my town went wild over the news, and that the clouds overhead cleared away as if by magic.

The sun did well to spread that summer sky at eventide with all the pageantry of color the spectrum knows. It would have been preposterous that such a day should slink off in dull, Quaker drabs. Men were shouting in the streets now. The old cannon left over from the Mexican war had been dragged out on to the rickety covered river-bridge, and was frightening the fishes, and shaking the dry, worm-eaten rafters, as fast as the swab and rammer could work. Our town bandsmen were

playing as they had never played before, down in the square in front of the post-office. The management of the Universe could not hurl enough wild fireworks into the exultant sunset to fit our mood.

The very air was filled with the scent of triumph—the spirit of conquest. It seemed only natural that I should march off to my mother and quite collectedly tell her that I desired to stay out all night with the other boys. I had never dreamed of daring to prefer such a request in other years. Now I was scarcely conscious of surprise when she gave her permission, adding with a smile that I would be glad enough to come in and go to bed before half the night was over.

I steeled my heart after supper with the proud resolve that if the night turned out to be as protracted as one of those Lapland winter nights we read about in the geography, I still would not surrender.

The boys outside were not so excited over the tidings of my unlooked-for victory as I had expected them to be. They received the news, in fact, with a rather mortifying stoicism. Tom Hemingway, however, took enough interest in the affair to suggest that, instead of spending my twenty cents in paltry fire-crackers, I might

go down town and buy another can of powder for his cannon. By doing so, he pointed out, I would be a part-proprietor, as it were, of the night's performance, and would be entitled to occasionally touch the cannon off. This generosity affected me, and I hastened down the long hill-street to show myself worthy of it, repeating the instruction of "Kentucky Bear-Hunter-coarse-grain" over and over again to myself as I went.

Half-way on my journey I overtook a person whom, even in the gathering twilight, I recognized as Miss Stratford, the school-teacher. She also was walking down the hill, and rapidly. It did not need the sight of a letter in her hand to tell me that she was going to the post-office. In those cruel war-days everybody went to the post-office. I myself went regularly to get our mail, and to exchange shin-plasters for one-cent stamps with which to buy yeast and other commodities that called for minute fractional currency.

Although I was very fond of Miss Stratford —I still recall her gentle eyes, and pretty, rounded, dark face, in its frame of long, black curls, with tender liking—I now coldly resolved to hurry past, pretending not to know her. It was a mean thing to do; Miss Stratford had

always been good to me, shining in that respect in brilliant contrast to my other teachers, whom I hated bitterly. Still, the "Kentucky Bear-Hunter-coarse-grain" was too important a matter to wait upon any mere female friendships, and I quickened my pace into a trot, hoping to scurry by unrecognized.

"Oh, Andrew! is that you?" I heard her call out as I ran past. For the instant I thought of rushing on, quite as if I had not heard. Then I stopped, and walked beside her.

"I am going to stay up all night: mother says I may; and I am going to fire off Tom Hemingway's big cannon every fourth time, straight through till breakfast time," I announced to her loftily.

"Dear me! I ought to be proud to be seen walking with such an important citizen," she answered, with kindly playfulness. She added more gravely, after a moment's pause: "Then Tom is out, playing with the other boys, is he?"

"Why, of course!" I responded. "He always lets us stand around when he fires off his cannon. He's got some 'ringers' this year too."

I heard Miss Stratford murmur an impulsive "Thank God!" under her breath.

Full as the day had been of surprises, I could

not help wondering that the fact of Tom's ringers should stir up such profound emotions in the teacher's breast. Since the subject so interested her, I went on with a long catalogue of Tom's other pyrotechnic possessions, and from that to an account of his almost supernatural collection of postage-stamps. In a few minutes more I am sure I should have revealed to her the great secret of my life, which was my determination, in case I came to assume the victorious rôle and rank of Napoleon, to immediately make Tom a Marshal of the Empire.

But we had reached the post-office square. I had never before seen it so full of people.

Even to my boyish eyes the tragic line of division which cleft this crowd in twain was apparent. On one side, over by the Seminary, the youngsters had lighted a bonfire, and were running about it—some of the bolder ones jumping through it in frolicsome recklessness. Close by stood the band, now valiantly thumping out "John Brown's Body" upon the noisy night air. It was quite dark by this time, but the musicians knew the tune by heart. So did the throng about them, and sang it with lusty fervor. The doors of the saloon toward the corner of the square were flung wide open. Two black streams of men kept in motion under the

radiance of the big reflector-lamp over these doors—one going in, one coming out. They slapped one another on the back as they passed, with exultant screams and shouts. Every once in a while, when movement was for the instant blocked, some voice lifted above the others would begin "Hip-hip-hip-hip—" and then would come a roar that fairly drowned the music.

On the post-office side of the square there was no bonfire. No one raised a cheer. A densely packed mass of men and women stood in front of the big square stone building, with its closed doors, and curtained windows upon which, from time to time, the shadow of some passing clerk, bareheaded and hurried, would be momentarily thrown. They waited in silence for the night mail to be sorted. If they spoke to one another, it was in whispers—as if they had been standing with uncovered heads at a funeral service in a graveyard. The dim light reflected over from the bonfire, or down from the shaded windows of the post-office, showed solemn, hard-lined, anxious faces. Their lips scarcely moved when they muttered little low-toned remarks to their neighbors. They spoke from the side of the mouth, and only on one subject.

"He went all through Fredericksburg without a scratch——"

"He looks so much like me—General Palmer told my brother he'd have known his hide in a tan-yard——"

"He's been gone—let's see—it was a year some time last April——"

"He was counting on a furlough the first of this month. I suppose nobody got one as things turned out——"

"He said, 'No; it ain't my style. I'll fight as much as you like, but I won't be nigger-waiter for no man, captain or no captain'——"

Thus I heard the scattered murmurs among the grown-up heads above me, as we pushed into the outskirts of the throng, and stood there, waiting with the rest. There was no sentence without a "he" in it. A stranger might have fancied that they were all talking of one man. I knew better. They were the fathers and mothers, the sisters, brothers, wives of the men whose regiments had been in that horrible three days' fight at Gettysburg. Each was thinking and speaking of his own, and took it for granted the others would understand. For that matter, they all did understand. The town knew the name and family of every

one of the twelve-score sons she had in this battle.

It is not very clear to me now why people all went to the post-office to wait for the evening papers that came in from the nearest big city. Nowadays they would be brought in bulk and sold on the street before the mail-bags had reached the post-office. Apparently, that had not yet been thought of in our slow old town.

The band across the square had started up afresh with "Annie Lisle"—the sweet old refrain of "Wave willows, murmur waters," comes back to me now after a quarter-century of forgetfulness—when all at once there was a sharp forward movement of the crowd. The doors had been thrown open, and the hallway was on the instant filled with a swarming multitude. The band had stopped as suddenly as it began, and no more cheering was heard. We could see whole troops of dark forms scudding toward us from the other side of the square.

"Run in for me—that's a good boy—ask for Dr. Stratford's mail," the teacher whispered, bending over me.

It seemed an age before I finally got back to her, with the paper in its postmarked wrapper

buttoned up inside my jacket. I had never been in so fierce and determined a crowd before, and I emerged from it at last, confused in wits and panting for breath. I was still looking about through the gloom in a foolish way for Miss Stratford, when I felt her hand laid sharply on my shoulder.

"Well—where is it?—did nothing come?" she asked, her voice trembling with eagerness, and the eyes which I had thought so soft and dove-like flashing down upon me as if she were Miss Pritchard, and I had been caught chewing gum in school.

I drew the paper out from under my roundabout, and gave it to her. She grasped it, and thrust a finger under the cover to tear it off. Then she hesitated for a moment, and looked about her. "Come where there is some light," she said, and started up the street. Although she seemed to have spoken more to herself than to me, I followed her in silence, close to her side.

For a long way the sidewalk in front of every lighted store-window was thronged with a group of people clustered tight about some one who had a paper, and was reading from it aloud. Beside broken snatches of this monologue, we caught, now groans of sorrow and

horror, now exclamations of proud approval, and even the beginnings of cheers, broken in upon by a general "'Sh–h!" as we hurried past outside the curb.

It was under a lamp in the little park nearly half-way up the hill that Miss Stratford stopped, and spread the paper open. I see her still, white-faced, under the flickering gaslight, her black curls making a strange dark bar between the pale-straw hat and the white of her shoulder shawl and muslin dress, her hands trembling as they held up the extended sheet. She scanned the columns swiftly, skimmingly for a time, as I could see by the way she moved her round chin up and down. Then she came to a part which called for closer reading. The paper shook perceptibly now, as she bent her eyes upon it. Then all at once it fell from her hands, and without a sound she walked away.

I picked the paper up, and followed her along the gravelled path. It was like pursuing a ghost, so weirdly white did her summer attire now look to my frightened eyes, with such a swift and deathly silence did she move. The path upon which we were described a circle touching the four sides of the square. She did not quit it when the intersection with our street was reached, but followed straight

round again toward the point where we had entered the park. This, too, in turn she passed, gliding noiselessly forward under the black arches of the overhanging elms. The suggestion that she did not know she was going round and round in a ring startled my brain. I would have run up to her now if I had dared.

Suddenly she turned, and saw that I was behind her. She sank slowly into one of the garden-seats, by the path, and held out for a moment a hesitating hand toward me. I went up at this and looked into her face. Shadowed as it was, the change I saw there chilled my blood. It was like the face of some one I had never seen before, with fixed, wide-open, staring eyes which seemed to look beyond me through the darkness, upon some terrible sight no other could see.

"Go—run and tell—Tom—to go home! His brother—his brother has been killed," she said to me, choking over the words as if they hurt her throat, and still with the same strange dry-eyed, far-away gaze covering yet not seeing me.

I held out the paper for her to take, but she made no sign, and I gingerly laid it on the seat beside her. I hung about for a minute or two

longer, imagining that she might have something else to say—but no word came. Then, with a feebly inopportune "Well, good-by," I started off alone up the hill.

It was a distinct relief to find that my companions were congregated at the lower end of the common, instead of their accustomed haunt farther up near my home, for the walk had been a lonely one, and I was deeply depressed by what had happened. Tom, it seems, had been called away some quarter of an hour before. All the boys knew of the calamity which had befallen the Hemingways. We talked about it, from time to time, as we loaded and fired the cannon which Tom had obligingly turned over to my friends. It had been out of deference to the feelings of the stricken household that they had betaken themselves and their racket off to the remote corner of the common. The solemnity of the occasion silenced criticism upon my conduct in forgetting to buy the powder. "There would be enough as long as it lasted," Billy Norris said, with philosophic decision.

We speculated upon the likelihood of De Witt Hemingway's being given a military funeral. These mournful pageants had by this time become such familiar things to us that the pros-

pect of one more had no element of excitement in it, save as it involved a gloomy sort of distinction for Tom. He would ride in the first mourning-carriage with his parents, and this would associate us, as we walked along ahead of the band, with the most intimate aspects of the demonstration. We regretted now that the soldier company which we had so long projected remained still unorganized. Had it been otherwise we would probably have been awarded the right of the line in the procession. Some one suggested that it was not too late — and we promptly bound ourselves to meet after breakfast next day to organize and begin drilling. If we worked at this night and day, and our parents instantaneously provided us with uniforms and guns, we should be in time. It was also arranged that we should be called the De Witt C. Hemingway Fire Zouaves, and that Billy Norris should be side captain. The chief command would, of course, be reserved for Tom. We would specially salute him as he rode past in the closed carriage, and then fall in behind, forming his honorary escort.

None of us had known the dead officer closely, owing to his advanced age. He was seven or eight years older than even Tom. But the more elderly among our group had seen him

play base-ball in the academy nine, and our neighborhood was still alive with legends of his early audacity and skill in collecting barrels and dry-goods boxes at night for election bonfires. It was remembered that once he carried away a whole front-stoop from the house of a little German tailor on one of the back streets. As we stood around the heated cannon, in the great black solitude of the common, our fancies pictured this redoubtable young man once more among us—not in his blue uniform, with crimson sash and sword laid by his side, and the gauntlets drawn over his lifeless hands, but as a taller and glorified Tom, in a roundabout jacket and copper-toed boots, giving the law on this his play ground. The very cannon at our feet had once been his. The night air became peopled with ghosts of his contemporaries—handsome boys who had grown up before us, and had gone away to lay down their lives in far-off Virginia or Tennessee.

These heroic shades brought drowsiness in their train. We lapsed into long silences, punctuated by yawns, when it was not our turn to ram and touch off the cannon. Finally some of us stretched ourselves out on the grass, in the warm darkness, to wait comfortably for this turn to come.

What did come instead was daybreak—finding Billy Norris and myself alone constant to our all-night vow. We sat up and shivered as we rubbed our eyes. The morning air had a chilling freshness that went to my bones—and these, moreover, were filled with those novel aches and stiffnesses which beds were invented to prevent. We stood up, stretching out our arms, and gaping at the pearl-and-rose beginnings of the sunrise in the eastern sky. The other boys had all gone home, and taken the cannon with them. Only scraps of torn paper and tiny patches of burnt grass marked the site of our celebration.

My first weak impulse was to march home without delay, and get into bed as quickly as might be. But Billy Norris looked so finely resolute and resourceful that I hesitated to suggest this, and said nothing, leaving the initiative to him. One could see, by the most casual glance, that he was superior to mere considerations of unseasonableness in hours. I remembered now that he was one of that remarkable body of boys, the paper-carriers, who rose when all others were asleep in their warm nests, and trudged about long before breakfast distributing the *Clarion* among the well-to-do households. This fact had given him his position in our

neighborhood as quite the next in leadership to Tom Hemingway.

He presently outlined his plans to me, after having tried the centre of light on the horizon, where soon the sun would be, by an old brass compass he had in his pocket—a process which enabled him, he said, to tell pretty well what time it was. The paper wouldn't be out for nearly two hours yet—and if it were not for the fact of a great battle, there would have been no paper at all on this glorious anniversary—but he thought we would go down-town and see what was going on around about the newspaper office. Forthwith we started. He cheered my faint spirits by assuring me that I would soon cease to be sleepy, and would, in fact, feel better than usual. I dragged my feet along at his side, waiting for this revival to come, and meantime furtively yawning against my sleeve.

Billy seemed to have dreamed a good deal, during our nap on the common, about the De Witt C. Hemingway Fire Zouaves. At least he had now in his head a marvellously elaborated system of organization, which he unfolded as we went along. I felt that I had never before realized his greatness, his born genius for command. His scheme halted nowhere. He allotted offices with discriminating firmness; he treated the

question of uniforms and guns as a trivial detail which would settle itself; he spoke with calm confidence of our offering our services to the Republic in the autumn; his clear vision was even the materials for a fife-and-drum corps among the German boys in the back streets. It was true that I appeared personally to play a meagre part in these great projects; the most that was said about me was that I might make a fair third-corporal. But Fate had thrown in my way such a wonderful chance of becoming intimate with Billy that I made sure I should swiftly advance in rank—the more so as I discerned in the background of his thoughts, as it were, a grim determination to make short work of Tom Hemingway's aristocratic pretensions, once the funeral was over.

We were forced to make a detour of the park on our way down, because Billy observed some half-dozen Irish boys at play with a cannon inside, whom he knew to be hostile. If there had been only four, he said, he would have gone in and routed them. He could whip any two of them, he added, with one hand tied behind his back. I listened with admiration. Billy was not tall, but he possessed great thickness of chest and length of arm. His skin was so dark that we canvassed the theory from time to time of his

having Indian blood. He did not discourage this, and he admitted himself that he was double-jointed.

The streets of the business part of the town, into which we now made our way, were quite deserted. We went around into the yard behind the printing-office, where the carrier-boys were wont to wait for the press to get to work; and Billy displayed some impatience at discovering that here too there was no one. It was now broad daylight, but through the windows of the composing-room we could see some of the printers still setting type by kerosene lamps.

We seated ourselves at the end of the yard on a big, flat, smooth-faced stone, and Billy produced from his pocket a number of "em" quads, so he called them, and with which the carriers had learned from the printers' boys to play a very beautiful game. You shook the pieces of metal in your hands and threw them on the stone; your score depended upon the number of nicked sides that were turned uppermost. We played this game in the interest of good-fellowship for a little. Then Billy told me that the carriers always played it for pennies, and that it was unmanly for us to do otherwise. He had no pennies at that precise moment, but would pay at the end of the week what he had lost; in the

meantime there was my twenty cents to go on with. After this Billy threw so many nicks uppermost that my courage gave way, and I made an attempt to stop the game; but a single remark from him as to the military destiny which he was reserving for me, if I only displayed true soldierly nerve and grit, sufficed to quiet me once more, and the play went on. I had now only five cents left.

Suddenly a shadow interposed itself between the sunlight and the stone. I looked up, to behold a small boy with bare arms and a blackened apron standing over me, watching our game. There was a great deal of ink on his face and hands, and a hardened, not to say rakish expression in his eye.

"Why don't you 'jeff' with somebody of your own size?" he demanded of Billy, after having looked me over critically.

He was not nearly so big as Billy, and I expected to see the latter instantly rise and crush him, but Billy only laughed and said we were playing for fun; he was going to give me all my money back. I was rejoiced to hear this, but still felt surprised at the propitiatory manner Billy adopted toward this diminutive inky boy. It was not the demeanor befitting a side-captain —and what made it worse was that the strange

boy loftily declined to be cajoled by it. He sniffed when Billy told him about the military company we were forming; he coldly shook his head, with a curt "Nixie!" when invited to join it; and he laughed aloud at hearing the name our organization was to bear.

"He ain't dead at all—that De Witt Hemingway," he said, with jeering contempt.

"Hain't he though!" exclaimed Billy. "The news come last night. Tom had to go home—his mother sent for him—on account of it!"

"I'll bet you a quarter he ain't dead," responded the practical inky boy. "Money up, though!"

"I've only got fifteen cents. I'll bet you that, though," rejoined Billy, producing my torn and dishevelled shinplasters.

"All right! Wait here!" said the boy, running off to the building and disappearing through the door. There was barely time for me to learn from my companion that this printer's apprentice was called "the devil," and could not only whistle between his teeth and crack his fingers, but chew tobacco, when he reappeared, with a long narrow strip of paper in his hand. This he held out for us to see, indicating with an ebon forefinger the special para-

graph we were to read. Billy looked at it sharply, for several moments, in silence. Then he said to me: "What does it say there? I must' a' got some powder in my eyes last night."

I read this paragraph aloud, not without an unworthy feeling that the inky boy would now respect me deeply:

"CORRECTION. Lieutenant De Witt C. Hemingway, of Company A, —th New York, reported in earlier despatches among the killed, is uninjured. The officer killed is Lieutenant Carl Heinninge, Company F, same regiment."

Billy's face visibly lengthened as I read this out, and he felt us both looking at him. He made a pretence of examining the slip of paper again, but in a half-hearted way. Then he ruefully handed over the fifteen cents and, rising from the stone, shook himself.

"Them Dutchmen never was no good!" was what he said.

The inky boy had put the money in the pocket under his apron, and grinned now with as much enjoyment as dignity would permit him to show. He did not seem to mind any longer the original source of his winnings, and

it was apparent that I could not with decency recall it to him. Some odd impulse prompted me, however, to ask him if I might have the paper he had in his hand. He was magnanimous enough to present me with the proof-sheet on the spot. Then with another grin he turned and left us.

Billy stood sullenly kicking with his bare toes into a sand-heap by the stone. He would not answer me when I spoke to him. It flashed across my perceptive faculties that he was not such a great man, after all, as I had imagined. In another instant or two it had become quite clear to me that I had no admiration for him whatever. Without a word, I turned on my heel and walked determinedly out of the yard and into the street, homeward bent.

All at once I quickened my pace; something had occurred to me. The purpose thus conceived grew so swiftly that soon I found myself running. Up the hill I sped, and straight through the park. If the Irish boys shouted after me I knew it not, but dashed on heedless of all else save the one idea. I only halted, breathless and panting, when I stood on Dr. Stratford's doorstep, and heard the night-bell inside jangling shrilly in response to my excited pull.

As I waited, I pictured to myself the old doctor as he would presently come down, half-dressed and pulling on his coat as he advanced. He would ask, eagerly, "Who is sick? Where am I to go?" and I would calmly reply that he unduly alarmed himself, and that I had a message for his daughter. He would, of course, ask me what it was, and I, politely but firmly, would decline to explain to any one but the lady in person. Just what might ensue was not clear—but I beheld myself throughout commanding the situation, at once benevolent, polished, and inexorable.

The door opened with unlooked-for promptness, while my self-complacent vision still hung in mid-air. Instead of the bald and spectacled old doctor, there confronted me a white-faced, solemn-eyed lady in a black dress, whom I did not seem to know. I stared at her, tongue-tied, till she said, in a low, grave voice, "Well, Andrew, what is it?"

Then of course I saw that it was Miss Stratford, my teacher, the person whom I had come to see. Some vague sense of what the sleepless night had meant in this house came to me as I gazed confusedly at her mourning, and heard the echo of her sad tones in my ears.

"Is some one ill?" she asked again.

"No; some one—some one is very well!" I managed to reply, lifting my eyes again to her wan face. The spectacle of its drawn lines and pallor all at once assailed my wearied and overtaxed nerves with crushing weight. I felt myself beginning to whimper, and rushing tears scalded my eyes. Something inside my breast seemed to be dragging me down through the stoop.

I have now only the recollection of Miss Stratford's kneeling by my side, with a supporting arm around me, and of her thus unrolling and reading the proof-paper I had in my hand. We were in the hall now, instead of on the stoop, and there was a long silence. Then she put her head on my shoulder and wept. I could hear and feel her sobs as if they were my own.

"I—I didn't think you'd cry—that you'd be so sorry," I heard myself saying, at last, in despondent self-defence.

Miss Stratford lifted her head and, still kneeling as she was, put a finger under my chin to make me look her in her face. Lo! the eyes were laughing through their tears; the whole countenance was radiant once more with the light of happy youth and with that other glory which youth knows only once.

"Why, Andrew, boy," she said, trembling, smiling, sobbing, beaming all at once, "didn't you know that people cry for very joy sometimes?"

And as I shook my head she bent down and kissed me.

My Aunt Susan

MY AUNT SUSAN

I HELD the lamp, while Aunt Susan cut up the pig.

The whole day had been devoted, I remember, to preparations for this great event. Early in the morning I had been to the butcher's to set in train the annual negotiations for a loan of cleaver and meat-saw ; and hours afterward had borne these implements proudly homeward through the village street. In the interval I had turned the grindstone, over at the Four Corners, while the grocer's hired man obligingly sharpened our carving-knife. Then there had been the even more back-aching task of clearing away the hard snow from the accustomed site of our wood-pile in the yard, and scraping together a frosted heap of chips and bark for the smudge in the smoke-barrel.

From time to time I sweetened this toil, and helped the laggard hours to a swifter pace, by paying visits to the wood-shed to have still another look at the pig. He was frozen very stiff, and there were small icicles in the crevices

whence his eyes had altogether disappeared. My emotions as I viewed his big, cold, pink carcass, with its extended legs, its bland and pasty countenance, and that awful emptiness underneath, were much mixed. Although I was his elder by seven or eight years, we had been close friends during all his life—or all except a very few weeks of his earliest sucking pighood, spent on his native farm. I had fed him daily; I had watched him grow week by week; more than once I had poked him with a stick as he ran around in his sty, to make him squeal for the edification of neighbors' boys who had come into our yard, and would now be sharply ordered out again by Aunt Susan.

As these kindly memories surged over me I could not but feel like a traitor to my old companion, as he lay thus hairless and pallid before my eyes. But then I would remember how good he was going to be to eat—and straightway return with a light heart to the work of kicking up more chips from the ice.

From the living-room in the rear of our little house came the monotonous incessant clatter of Aunt Susan's carpet loom. Through the window I could see the outlines of her figure and the back of her head as she sat on her high

bench. It was to me the most familiar of all spectacles, this tireless woman bending resolutely over her work. She was there when I first cautiously ventured my nose out from under the warm blanket of a winter's morning. Very, very often I fell asleep at night in my bed in the recess, lulled off by the murmur of the diligent loom.

Presently I went in to warm myself, and stood with my red fingers over the stove top. She cast but one vague glance at me, through the open frame of the loom between us, and went on with her work. It was not our habit to talk much in that house. She was too busy a woman, for one thing, to have much time for conversation. The impression that she preferred not to talk was always present in my boyish mind. I call up the picture of her still as I saw her then under the top bar of the cumbrous old machine, sitting with lips tight together, and resolute, masterful eyes bent upon the twining intricacy of warp and woof before her. At her side were piled a dozen or more big balls of carpet rags, which the village wives and daughters cut up, sewed together and wound in the long winter evenings, while the men-folks sat with their stockinged feet on the stove hearth, and read out the lat-

est "news from the front" in their *Weekly Tribune.*

I knew all these rag balls by the names of their owners. Not only did I often go to their houses for them, upon the strength of the general village rumor that they were ready, and always carry back the finished lengths of carpet; but I had long since unconsciously grown to watch all the varying garments and shifts of fashion in the raiment of our neighbors, with an eye single to the likelihood of their eventually turning up at Aunt Susan's loom. When Hiram Mabie's checkered butternut coat was cut down for his son Roswell, I noted the fact merely as a stage of its progress toward carpet rags. If Mrs. Wilkins concluded to turn her flowered delaine dress a third year, or Sarah Northrup had her bright saffron shawl dyed black, I was sensible of a wrong having been done our little household. I felt like crossing the street whenever I saw approaching the portly figure of Cyrus Husted's mother, the woman who dragged everybody into her house to show them the ingrain carpet she had bought at Tecumseh, and assured them that it was much cheaper in the long run than the products of my Aunt's industry. I tingled with indignation as she passed me on the sidewalk, puffing

for breath and stepping mincingly because her shoes were too tight for her.

Nearly all the knowledge of our neighbors' sayings and doings which reached Aunt Susan came to her from me. She kept herself to herself with a vengeance, toiling early and late, rarely going beyond the confines of her yard save on Sunday mornings, when we went to church, and treating with frosty curtness the few people who ventured to come to our house on business or from social curiosity. For one thing, this Juno Mills in which we lived was not really our home. We had only been there for four or five years—a space which indeed spanned all my recollections of life—but left my Aunt more or less a stranger and new-comer. She spared no pains to maintain that condition. I can see now that there were good reasons for this stern aloofness. At the time I thought it was altogether due to the proud and unsociable nature of my Aunt.

In my child's mind I regarded her as distinctly an elderly person. People outside, I know, spoke of her as an old maid, sometimes winking furtively over my head as they did so. But she was not really old at all—was in truth just barely in the thirties. Doubtless the fact that she was tall and dark, with very black

hair, and that years of steady concentration of sight, upon the strings and threads of the loom, had scored a scowling vertical wrinkle between her near-sighted eyes gave me my notion of her advanced maturity. And in all her ways and words, too, she was so far removed from any idea of youthful softness! I could not remember her having ever kissed me. My imagination never evolved the conceit of her kissing anybody. I had always had at her hands uniformly good treatment, good food, good clothes; after I had learned my letters from the old maroon plush label on the Babbitt's soap box which held the wood behind the stove, and expanded this knowledge by a study of street signs, she had herself taught me how to read, and later provided me with books for the village school. She was my only known relative—the only person in the world who had ever done anything for me. Yet it could not be said that I loved her. Indeed she no more raised the suggestion of tenderness in my mind than did the loom at which she spent her waking hours.

"The Perkinses asked me why you didn't get the butcher to cut up the pig," I remarked at last, rubbing my hands together over the hot stove griddles.

"It's none of their business!" said Aunt Susan, with laconic promptness.

"And Devillo Pollard's got a new overcoat," I added. "He hasn't worn the old army one now for upward of a week."

"If this war goes on much longer," commented my Aunt, "every carpet in Dearborn County 'll be as blue as a whetstone."

I think that must have been the entire conversation of the afternoon. I especially recall the remark about the overcoat. For two years now the balls of rags had contained an increasing proportion of pale blue woollen strips, as the men of the country round about came home from the South, or bought cheap garments from the second-hand dealers in Tecumseh. All other colors had died out. There was only this light blue, and the black of bombazine or worsted mourning into which the news in each week's papers forced one or another of the neighboring families. To obviate this monotony, some of the women dyed their white rags with butternut or even cochineal, but this was a mere drop in the bucket, so to speak. The loom spun out only long, depressing rolls of black and blue.

My memory leaps lightly forward now to the early evening, when I held the lamp in

the woodshed, and Aunt Susan cut up the pig.

How joyfully I watched her every operation! Every now and again my interest grew so beyond proper bounds that I held the lamp sidewise, and the flame smoked the chimney. I was in mortal terror over this lamp, even when it was standing on the table quite by itself. We often read in the paper of explosions from this new kerosene by which people were instantly killed and houses wrapped in an unquenchable fire. Aunt Susan had stood out against the strange invention, long after most of the other homes of Juno Mills were familiar with the idea of the lamp. Even after she had yielded, and I went to the grocery for more oil and fresh chimneys and wicks, like other boys, she refused to believe that this inflammable fluid was really squeezed out of hard coal, as they said. And for years we lived in momentary belief that our lamp was about to explode.

My fears of sudden death could not, however, for a moment stand up against the delighted excitement with which I viewed the dismemberment of the pig. It was very cold in the shed, but neither of us noticed that. My Aunt attacked the job with skilful resolution and energy, as was her way, chopping small

bones, sawing vehemently through big ones, hacking and slicing with the knife, like a strong man in a hurry.

For a long time no word was spoken. I gazed in silence as the head was detached, and then resolved itself slowly into souse—always tacitly set aside as my special portion. In prophecy I saw the big pan, filled with ears, cheeks, snout, feet, and tail, all boiled and allowed to grow cold in their own jelly—that pan to which I was free to repair any time of day until everything was gone. I thought of myself, too, with apron tied round my neck and the chopping-bowl on my knees, reducing what remained of the head into small bits, to be seasoned by my Aunt, and then fill other pans as head-cheese. The sage and summer savory hung in paper flour-bags from the rafters overhead. I looked up at them with rapture. It seemed as if my mouth already tasted them in head-cheese and sausage and in the hot gravy which basted the succulent spare-rib. Only the abiding menace of the lamp kept me from dancing with delight.

Gradually, however, as my Aunt passed from the tid-bits to the more substantial portions of her task, getting out the shoulders, the hams for smoking, the pieces for salting down in the

brine-barrel, my enthusiasm languished a trifle. The lamp grew heavy as I changed it from hand to hand, holding the free fingers at a respectful distance over the chimney-top for warmth, and shuffling my feet about. It was truly very cold. I strove to divert myself by smiling at the big shadow my bustling Aunt cast against the house side of the shed, and by moving the lamp to affect its proportions, but broke out into yawns instead. A mouse ran swiftly across the scantling just under the lean-to roof. At the same time I thought I caught the muffled sound of distant rapping, as if at our own rarely used front door. I was too sleepy to decide whether I had really heard a noise or not.

All at once I roused myself with a start. The lamp had nearly slipped from my hands, and the horror of what might have happened frightened me into wakefulness.

"The Perkins girls keep on calling me 'Wise child.' They yell it after me all the while," I said, desperately clutching at a subject which I hoped would interest my Aunt. I had spoken to her about it a week or so before, and it had stirred her quite out of her wonted stern calm. If anything would induce her to talk now, it would be this.

"They do, eh?" she said, with an alert sharpness of voice, which dwindled away into a sigh. Then, after a moment, she added, "Well, never you mind. You just keep right on, tending to your own affairs, and studying your lessons, and in time it'll be you who can laugh at them and all their low-down lot. They only do it to make you feel bad. Just don't you humor them."

"But I don't see," I went on, "why—what do they call me 'wise child' *for?* I asked Hi Budd, up at the Corners, but he only just chuckled and chuckled to himself, and wouldn't say a word."

My Aunt suspended work for the moment, and looked severely down upon me. "Well! Ira Clarence Blodgett!" she said, with grim emphasis, "I am ashamed of you! I thought you had more pride! The idea of talking about things like that with a coarse, rough, hired man—in a barn!"

To hear my full name thus pronounced, syllable by syllable, sent me fairly weltering, as it were, under Aunt Susan's utmost condemnation. It was the punishment reserved for my gravest crimes. I hung my head, and felt the lamp wagging nervelessly in my hands. I could not deny even her speculative impeachment as to

the barn ; it was blankly apparent in my mind that the fact of the barn made matters much worse.

"I was helping him wash their two-seated sleigh," I submitted, weakly. "He asked me to."

"What does that matter?" she asked, peremptorily. "What business have you got going around talking with men about me?"

"Why, it wasn't about you at all, Aunt Susan," I put in more confidently. "I said the Perkins girls kept calling me 'wise child,' and I asked Hi——"

Aunt Susan sighed once more, and interrupted me to inspect the wick of the lamp. Then she turned again to her work, but less spiritedly now. She took up the cleaver with almost an air of sadness.

"You don't understand—yet," she said. "But don't make it any harder for me by talking. Just go along and say nothing to nobody. People will think more of you."

My mind strove in vain to grapple with this suggested picture of myself, moving about in perpetual dumbness, followed everywhere by universal admiration. The lamp would *not* hold itself straight.

All at once we both distinctly heard the

sound of footsteps close outside. The noise of crunching on the dry, frozen snow came through the thin clap-boards with sharp resonance. Aunt Susan ceased cutting and listened.

"I heard somebody rapping at the front door a spell ago," I ventured to whisper. My Aunt looked at me, and probably realized that I was too sleepy to be accountable for my actions. At all events she said nothing, but moved toward the low door of the shed, cleaver in hand.

"Who's there?" she called out in shrill, belligerent tones; and this demand she repeated, after an interval of silence, when an irresolute knocking was heard on the door.

We heard a man coughing immediately outside the door. I saw Aunt Susan start at the sound—almost as if she recognized it. A moment later this man, whoever he was, mastered his cough sufficiently to call out, in a hesitating way:

"Is that you, Susan?"

Aunt Susan raised her chin on the instant, her nostrils drawn in, her eyes flashing like those of a pointer when he sees a gun lifted. I had never seen her so excited. She wheeled round once, and covered me with a swift, penetrating, comprehensive glance, under which my knees smote together, and the lamp lurched

perilously. Then she turned again, glided toward the door, halted, moved backward two or three steps—looked again at me, and this time spoke.

"Well, I *swan!*" was what she said, and I felt that she looked it.

"Susan! Is that you?" came the voice again, hoarsely appealing. It was not the voice of any neighbor. I made sure I had never heard it before. I could have smiled to myself at the presumption of any man calling my Aunt by her first name, if I had not been too deeply mystified.

"I've been directed here to find Miss Susan Pike," the man outside explained, between fresh coughings.

"Well, then, mog your boots out of this as quick as ever you can!" my Aunt replied, with great promptitude. "You won't find her here!"

"But I *have* found her!" the stranger protested, with an accent of wearied deprecation. "Don't you know me, Susan? I am not strong, this cold air is very bad for me."

"I say 'get out!'" my Aunt replied, sharply. Her tone was unrelenting enough, but I noted that she had tipped her head a little to one side, a clear sign to me that she was opening

her mind to argument. I felt certain that presently I should see this man.

And, sure enough, after some further parley, Susan went to the door, and, with a half-defiant gesture, knocked the hook up out of the staple.

"Come along then, if you must!" she said, in scornful tones. Then she marched back till she stood beside me, angry resolution written all over her face and the cleaver in her hand.

A tall, dark figure, opaque against a gleaming background of moonlight and snowlight, was what I for a moment saw in the frame of the open doorway. Then, as he entered, shut and hooked the door behind him, and stood looking in a dazed way over at our lamplit group, I saw that he was a slender, delicately featured man, with a long beard of yellowish brown and gentle eyes. He was clad as a soldier, heavy azure-hued caped overcoat and all, and I already knew enough of uniforms—cruel familiarity of my war-time infancy—to tell by his cap that he was an officer. He coughed again before a word was spoken He looked the last man in the world to go about routing up peaceful households of a winter's night.

"Well, now—what is your business?" de-

manded Aunt Susan. She put her hand on my shoulder as she spoke, something I had never known her to do before. I felt confused under this novel caress, and it seemed only natural that the stranger, having studied my Aunt's face in a wistful way for a moment, should turn his gaze upon me. I was truly a remarkable object, with Aunt Susan's hand on my shoulder.

"I could make no one hear at the other door. I saw the light through the window here, and came around," the stranger explained. He sent little straying glances at the remains of the pig and at the weapon my Aunt held at her side, but for the most part looked steadily at me.

"That doesn't matter," said Aunt Susan, coldly. "What do you want, now that you *are* here? Why did you come at all? What business had you to think that I ever wanted to lay eyes on you again? How could you have the courage to show your face here—in *my* house?"

The man's shoulders shivered under their cape, and a wan smile curled in his beard. "You keep your house at a very low temperature," he said with grave pleasantry. He did not seem to mind Aunt Susan's hostile demeanor at all.

"I was badly wounded last September," he went on, quite as if that was what she had asked him, "and lay at the point of death for weeks. Then they sent me North, and I have been in the hospital at Albany ever since. One of the nurses there, struck by my name, asked me if I had any relatives in her village—that is, Juno Mills. In that way I learned where you were living. I suppose I ought not to have come—against doctor's orders—the journey has been too much—I have suffered a good deal these last two hours."

I felt my Aunt's hand shake a little on my shoulder. Her voice, though, was as implacable as ever.

"There is a much better reason than that why you should not have come," she said, bitterly.

The stranger was talking to her, but looking at me. He took a step toward me now, with a softened sparkle in his eyes and an outstretched hand. "This—this then is the boy, is it?" he asked.

With a gesture of amazing swiftness Aunt Susan threw her arm about me, and drew me close to her side, lamp and all. With her other hand she lifted and almost brandished the cleaver.

"No, you don't!" she cried. "You don't touch him! He's mine! I've worked for him day and night ever since I took him from his dying mother's breast. I closed her eyes. I forgave her. Blood is thicker'n water after all. She was my sister. Yes, I forgave poor Emmeline, and I kissed her before she died. She gave the boy to me, and he's mine! Mine, do you hear?—*mine?*"

"My dear Susan——" our visitor began.

"Don't 'dear Susan' me! I heard it once—once too often. Oh, never again! You left me to run away with her. I don't speak of that. I forgave that when I forgave her. But that was the least of it. You left her to herself for months before she died. You've left the boy to himself ever since. You can't begin now. I've worked my fingers to the bone for him—you can't make me stop now."

"I went to California," he went on in a low voice, speaking with difficulty. "We didn't get on together as smoothly as we might perhaps, but I had no earthly notion of deserting her. I was ill myself, lying in yellow-fever quarantine off Key West, at the very time she died. When I finally got back you and the child were both gone. I could not trace you. I went to the war. I had made money in Cali-

fornia. It is trebled now. I rose to be Colonel—I have a Brigadier's brevet in my pocket now. Yet I give you my word I never have desired anything so much, all the time, as to find you again—you and the boy."

My Aunt nodded her head comprehendingly. I felt from the tremor of her hand that she was forcing herself against her own desires to be disagreeable.

"Yes, that war," was what she said. "I know about that war! The honest men that go get killed. But you—*you* come back!"

The man frowned wearily, and gave a little groan of discouragement. "Then this is final, is it? You don't wish to speak with me; you really desire to keep the boy—you are set against my ever seeing him—touching him. Why, then, of course—of course—excuse my——"

And then for the first time I saw a human being tumble in a dead swoon. My little brain, dazed and bewildered by the strange new things I was hearing, lagged behind my eyes in following the sudden pallor on the man's face—lagged behind my ears in noting the tell-tale quaver and gasp in his voice. Before I comprehended what was toward—lo! there was no man standing in front of me at all.

Like a flash Aunt Susan snatched the lamp

from my grasp and flung herself upon her knees beside the limp and huddled figure. After a momentary inspection of the white, bearded face, she set the lamp down on the frozen earth floor and took his head upon her lap.

"Take the lamp, run to the buttery, and bring the bottle of hartshorn!" she commanded me, hurriedly. "Or, no—wait—open the door—that's it—walk ahead with the light!"

The strong woman stood upright as she spoke, her shoulders braced against the burden she bore in her arms. Unaided, with slow steps, she carried the senseless form of the soldier into the living room, and held it without rest of any sort, the while I, under her direction, wildly tore off quilts, blankets, sheets, and feather-tick from my bed and heaped them up on the floor beside the stove. Then, when I had spread them to her liking, she bent and gently laid him down.

"*Now* get the hartshorn," she said. I heard her putting more wood on the fire, but when I returned with the phial she sat once again with the stranger's head upon her knee. She was softly stroking the fine, waving brown hair upon his brow, but her eyes were lifted, looking dreamily at far-away things. I could have

sworn to the beginnings of a smile about her parted lips. It was not like my Aunt Susan at all.

"Come here, Ira," I heard her say at last, after a long time had been spent in silence. I walked over and stood at her shoulder, looking down upon the pale face upturned against the black of her worn dress. The blue veins just discernible in temples and closed eyelids, the delicately turned features, the way his brown beard curled, the fact that his breathing was gently regular once more—these are what I saw. But my Aunt seemed to demand that I should see more.

"Well?" she asked, in a tone mellowed beyond all recognition. "Don't you—don't you see who it is?"

I suppose I really must have had an idea by this time. But I remember that I shook my head.

My Aunt positively did smile this time. "The Perkins girls were wrong," she said; "there isn't the least smitch of a 'wise child' about *you!*"

There was another pause. Emboldened by consciousness of a change in the emotional atmosphere, I was moved to lay my hand upon my Aunt's shoulder. The action did not seem

to displease her, and we remained thus for some minutes, watching together this strange addition to our family party.

Finally she told me to get on my cap, comforter, and mittens, and run over to Dr. Peabody's and fetch him back with me. The purport of my mission oppressed me.

"Is he going to die then?" I asked.

Aunt Susan laughed outright. "You little goose," she said; "do you think the doctors kill people *every* time?"

And, laughing again, with a trembling softness in her voice and tears upon her black eyelashes, she lifted her face to mine—and kissed me!

* * * * *

No fatality dogged good old Doctor Peabody's big footsteps through the snow that night. I fell asleep while he was still at my Aunt's house, but not before the stranger had recovered consciousness, and was sitting up in the large rocking-chair, and it was clearly understood that he was soon to be well again.

The kindly, garrulous doctor did more than reassure our little household. He must have spent most of the night going about reassuring the other households of Juno Mills. At all events, when I first went out next morning—

while our neighbors were still eating their buckwheat cakes and pork fat by lamplight—everybody seemed to know that my father, the distinguished Colonel Blodgett, had returned from the war on sick leave, and was lying ill at the house of his sister-in-law. I felt at once the altered attitude of the village toward me. Important citizens who had never spoken to me before—dignified and portly men in blue cutaway coats with brass buttons, and high stiff hats of shaggy white silk—stopped now to lay their hands on the top of my head and ask me how my father, the Colonel, was getting along. The grocer's hired man gave me a Jackson ball and two molasses cookies the very first time I saw him. Even the Perkins girls, during the course of the afternoon, strolled over to our front gate, and, instead of hurling enigmatic objurgations at me, invited me to come out and play. The butcher of his own accord came and finished cutting up the pig.

These changes came back to me as one part of the great metamorphosis which the night's events had wrought. Another part was the definite disappearance of the stern-faced, tirelessly toiling old maid I had known all my life as Aunt Susan. In her place there was now a much younger woman, with pleasant lines about

her pretty mouth, and eyes that twinkled when they looked at me, and who paid no attention to the loom whatever, but bustled cheerily about the house instead, thinking only of good things for us to eat.

I remember that I marked my sense of the difference by abandoning the old name of Aunt Susan, and calling her now just "Auntie." And one day, in the mid-spring, after she and her convalescent patient had returned from their first drive together into the country round about, she told me, as she took off her new bonnet in an absent-minded way, and looked meditatively at the old disused loom, and then bent down to brush my forehead with her warm lips —she told me that henceforth I was to call her Mother.

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